THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S

AUGUST 1992
$2.25 U.S.
$2.95 CAN.

RY MAGAZINE

A WINNING
15
STORIES
BY

NAN
HAMILTON
RALPH
McINERNY
UNE
HOMSON
ILLIAN
E LA TO

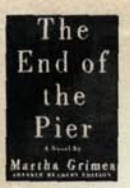
HALSEY ROYDEN
13466 THREE FORKS
LOS ALTOS CA 94022-2404

5-DIGIT 94022
22RYD 2134 63F09X 29
98 MAY93 ELQ ED 00000
AV

0 387166 9

Lynne Barrett

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



9332 $20.00/$9.98

6049 $18.95/$9.98

1131 $18.95/$8.98

1503 $19.95/$9.98

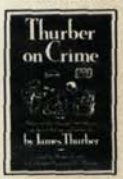
Get away with MURDER!

(6 books for 99¢ with membership)

It's easy to make a killing with *Mystery Guild*. First, slip the sharpest scissors out of the drawer. Then, ever so quietly, cut out the coupon below. Finish it off with a pen (caution: do not use invisible ink). Tonight, you can start slashing as much as *60% off* publishers' edition prices. Become a partner in crime with *Mystery Guild*!

9340 $17.95/$9.98

*7666 $21.50/$9.98



4440 $18.95/$9.98

7468 $18.00/$9.98

4333 $19.00/$9.98

7195 $19.95/$9.98

4721 $19.00/$9.98

1271 $20.00/$9.98

HERE'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU JOIN...

6 BOOKS FOR 99¢—PLUS A FREE CLUB TOTE. Send no money now. You'll be billed 99¢, plus shipping and handling, when your membership is accepted.

A GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION. If you're not 100% satisfied with your books, return them within 10 days *at our expense*. Membership will be canceled and you'll owe nothing. The Club Tote is your free gift to keep.

HUGE DISCOUNTS ON HARDCOVER BOOKS. Save as much as 60% off publishers' edition prices. Club books are sometimes altered in size to fit special presses.

THE FREE CLUB MAGAZINE. You'll receive up to 16 issues a year. Each issue reviews the Featured Book Selection(s) plus a wide variety of books from the Club's extensive library.

SHOPPING MADE SIMPLE. To get the Featured Book Selection(s), *do nothing*—it will be sent automatically. If you prefer another book—or none at all—simply return your Member Reply Form by the specified date. A shipping and handling charge is added to each order.

AN EASY-TO-MEET OBLIGATION. Take up to 2 years to buy 4 more books at regular low Club prices. Afterwards, you may resign membership anytime.

RISK-FREE RETURN PRIVILEGES. If you get an unwanted book because your Club magazine was delayed and you had less than 10 days to respond, simply return the book *at our expense.*

Prices in fine print are for publishers' editions.

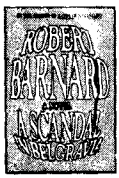
Prices in bold print are for Club hardcover editions.

x Hardcover edition exclusively for Club members

* Explicit scenes and/or language

FREE TOTE
with membership

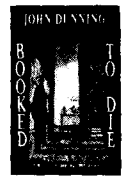
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



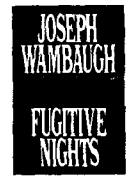
5678 $17.95/$9.98

3681 $17.95/$7.98

*5819 $18.00/$9.98

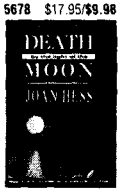


5694 $19.95/$9.98



7716 $22.00/$12.98

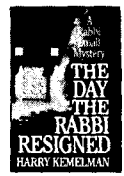
6130 $18.00/$8.98



5710 $18.95/$9.98

9365 $19.95/$8.98

6056 $16.95/$8.98



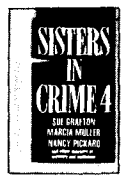
1164 $20.00/$8.98

7682 $20.00/$11.98

6064 $18.95/$9.98

6023 $17.95/$8.98

*1149 $8.98x



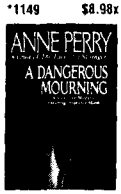
1255 $9.98x

3673 $19.95/$9.98

6106 $17.95/$8.98

5702 $12.98x

1347 $17.95/$7.98

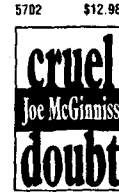


4457 $18.00/$9.98

8573 $19.95/$9.98

*6148 $22.95/$13.98

*6155 $21.95/$12.98



*7484 $25.00/$12.98

MYSTERY GUILD

MAIL TO: *Mystery Guild*
6550 East 30th Street
P.O. Box 6362
Indianapolis, IN 46206-6362

Please write book numbers here:

YES! Please enroll me in *Mystery Guild* according to the risk-free membership plan described in this ad. Send me the 6 BOOKS I've indicated—plus my FREE CLUB TOTE. Bill me just 99¢, plus shipping and handling.

SAVE MORE—BUY YOUR FIRST BOOK NOW FOR $3.49
☐ Send me the book I've indicated and reduce my commitment to only 3 more books. Bill me an additional $3.49, plus shipping and handling.

(write book number)

28563 78

Mr./Mrs.
Miss/Ms. _____
(please print)

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

28564 79

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members serviced from Canada, where offer is slightly different. Sales tax added where applicable. We reserve the right to reject any application.

EQM 8/92

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE
ELLERY QUEEN®

Now You See It . . . Now You Don't	Nan Hamilton	4
Unfrozen Stiff	Ralph McInerny	17
Moving Target	Morris Hershman	30
Dog Act	Herbert Resnicow	42
Erasing Footprints	John F. Suter	51
Birds, By Snow	Suzanne Jones	58
The Jury Box	Jon L. Breen	65
Clay Lies Still	William Bankier	68
The Grey-Mailing of Leonard Coombes	Scott Mackay	82
Can You Hear Me?	Gretchen Sprague	92
The Problem of the Vanishing Salesman	Edward D. Hoch	98
The Small Shadow	Lillian de la Torre	116
Lament for a Legend: Lizzie Borden Revisited	Mary D. Smith	123
The Lavender Garden	Jackie Walsh	128
Best Friends	Barbara Owens	132
Cliffscape With Figures	June Thomson	146

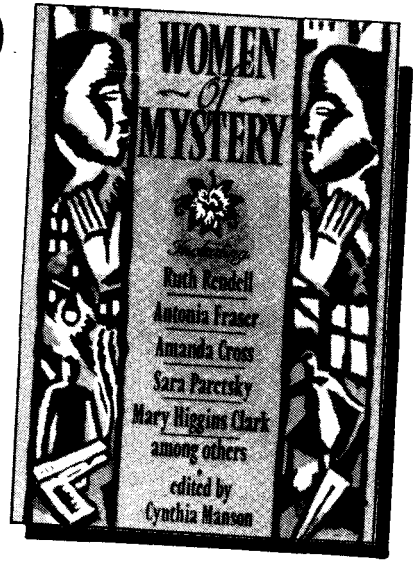
On our cover is LYNNE BARRETT
(see page 64)

Cover Photograph by Peter Papadopolous

Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10168-0035
Note: indicia on page 154

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TOP WHODUNITS BY THE TOP WOMEN IN THE FIELD



For the first time ever, here are fifteen of the best mystery stories by women taken from the pages of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine.* Thrilling tales by Ruth Rendell, Sara Paretsky, Mary Higgins Clark, Faye Kellerman, Amanda Cross, Joan Hess, Antonia Fraser and eight other terrific writers are included.

Please send me ____ copies of WOMEN OF MYSTERY. I enclose my check or money order for $_____ ($18.95 plus $1.50 for postage and handling for each copy.) NY State residents; add 8.25% NYC sales tax to your order. Send orders to:
Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc.
Dept. 082 EL **260 Fifth Avenue**
New York, NY 10001

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ **ZIP**_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** short story by

NAN HAMILTON

Lieutenant Ohara is back! Featured in several stories for EQMM *(including his first appearance in print), two full-length novels, and finally the television series* Ohara, *Nan Hamilton's Japanese-American police detective is called upon here to investigate a case in which the hero of his boyhood appears to be a suspect in a murder case. . . .*

NOW YOU SEE IT . . . NOW YOU DON'T

by NAN HAMILTON

The old man stared at the dimly lit house, shivering under the unexpected bite of the Los Angeles winter wind. In his heart, though, he knew the chill was from fear of what he had come to do.

Taka, his companion, looked warm in his shabby Goodwill coat, which enveloped his short body like a blanket. A red bandanna showed at the coat collar, and a baseball cap with a shiny visor pushed his reddish hair down around his ears.

Pleased to be out, Taka grinned in his happy, loose-lipped way. The old man smiled back, glad of his friend's unwitting comfort. Taka was strong and clever, but his brain had not developed with his body. Normal speech was beyond him, though he understood signs, a tone of voice, and certain often-repeated words.

The house before them was Marty Glover's place of business, as well as his home. Obese and lazy, Marty waited like a fat spider in his web, letting the flies come to him, lured by hope of a loan, drugs, or an occasional "hit" to order.

© 1992 by Nan Hamilton.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The old man looked down at his twisted hands. Once they had twinkled silver coins between the fingers, pressed impossible card fans, worked the silks with grace and skill. They had made him the Great Satori. Marty had ended all that.

Suddenly his plan seemed stupid and dangerous. Panicked, the old man wanted to run away from it, but he knew he couldn't. This was the last chance for him, for Taka, and the others.

Heart pounding, he went up on the porch and rang Marty's bell. As they waited, Satori touched the letter in his pocket, and the gun beneath it. He sensed someone at the door's peephole, then the door opened on a chain. Marty's sallow face peered out. "Get outta here!"

Satori spoke only one word: "Kodomo."

Marty had reason to fear Kodomo, the Yakusa boss. His fingers trembled as he released the door chain. "Is he here?"

Taka, impatient and cold, immediately pushed his way inside. Satori followed.

Two detectives in a car down the street noted the arrival of the old man and his midget companion. They were staking out Marty's house to pick up an escapee, Les Lugar. He would need money, so he'd probably come to Marty Glover, his old provider.

After a time they saw Marty manhandle the late-night visitors out the door. Suddenly, he let go of them and yelled, "He bit me!" The midget ran to the side of the porch and jumped off.

Marty pulled out a knife, like the street-fighter he was. "I'll kill the little bastard!"

The old man saw the shiny visor of a baseball cap at the side of the porch. Marty did too, and began to move. He staggered as the old man leaped on his back and hung on. Throwing him off, Marty slammed a fist at the old man's head and knocked him down. Then he threw him off the porch.

A door opened across the street and a woman looked out.

"Whatcha lookin' at?" Marty shouted. "Get back inside, bitch!"

Painfully, the old man pulled himself up and began to limp away. Marty took a last look around, then stamped back into the house.

After a moment, the two detectives were alerted by an indistinct sound. Bill, the younger of the two, looked at his partner. "Hear something, Fred?" He barely got the question out when they heard the muffled sound of a shot, then two more in rapid succession.

"Let's go!" Fred gunned the car's engine to life and raced toward Glover's house. As they pulled up in front, Bill jumped out and, following his partner's hand signals, ran to the rear, arousing the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neighbor's vigilant dog to frantic barking. Fred sprinted up on the porch. He couldn't see into the draped windows, but he noticed a thin line of light around the edge of the door.

Bill returned. "Nothing's happening in back. Locked tight."

Fred nodded toward the front door. "It's just closed, not latched. Let's take a look inside." Guns drawn, they announced themselves as police, then entered the house.

A small entry hall opened into a sparsely furnished living room. There they found Marty, sprawled on his back on the floor.

"Cover me," Bill said. "I'll check him." This he did, even though the bloody torn mess of Marty's forehead made it a by-the-book procedure. "Do we search the house?"

"Negative," Fred replied. "Whoever did it might still be here. Cover the rear. I'll call for backup and watch the front." They secured the house until the backup team arrived. Then it was searched, room by room, but there was no one there except the dead man.

Lieutenant Sam Ohara, also known as "Irish" Ohara despite his good-looking Japanese face, arrived late from another case. The medical examiner and homicide team were well into the rites attendant on murder.

Observing the ordered chaos around him, Ohara was uncomfortably aware of how stuffy the room was with the odors of blood, death, and some other undefinable smell.

A teakwood desk, in front of which the victim lay, had been ransacked, its contents randomly scattered. By far the most riveting sight was an ivory-handled knife protruding from the high back of the desk chair. There was a red smear on its handle.

The M.E.'s off-the-cuff opinion was concise: "The victim was shot between the eyes, and again through the cheek. There's blood and matter in the gun barrel. No suicide, though. The murder weapon was thrown too far. Those blood spatters on the desktop indicate that he was leaning across it when he took the shot between the eyes."

"I wonder why," Ohara mused.

"Maybe for this?" The M.E. picked up a glassine evidence bag from beside the body. It contained a frayed piece of silky red material. "It was clutched in the victim's fingers."

Ohara had the feeling he'd seen it, or something like it, before. "There were three shots reported," he said. "Were they all in the victim?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No," the M.E. replied. "The first shot went wild . . . up there." He pointed to a bullet scar, marked in chalk, in the ceiling. "The next two went into him." He picked up the victim's hand. "He was bitten shortly before death, too. Can I take him now?"

Ohara nodded. The stakeout cops had already pinpointed the time of death. He decided to check out the rest of the house.

In the surprisingly luxurious bedroom, he found an expensive black leather suitcase with gold initials, *MG*. It was half packed. A passport lay on top of the clothes. It had the victim's picture, but was made out to "Maurice Golden." The bathroom was equally luxurious. Glover did well for himself. It was expensively equipped, tiled in a pattern of long lines like an art abstract. Discarded clothes and damp towels showed Marty had been in a hurry.

Ohara went outside, glad of the fresh air, and walked around the house. Its foundation was hidden by a dense hedge. Whether it was chance, or the bright morning light, on the left rear side of the hedge he spotted the whitish ends of broken branches. At the cost of some nasty scratches, he pried them apart and found a crawl space with its protective grille wrenched loose. Ohara guessed it must lead to a trap door inside.

The team wasn't enthusiastic about searching for it, but looked in every possible place. No inside access was found. Still, Ohara could not accept the "locked room" theory so beloved of the classic mystery. He went over the house again. The only unbarred window was a skylight in the luxurious bathroom. It was built over a mirrored basin-cum-vanity, on which he climbed to see if the skylight could be opened. It could not.

As he jumped down, his ankle turned under him. Looking to see what he'd stumbled on, he noticed that one of the long pattern lines of tiling was not quite flat. Wedging his fingers along it, he pulled. A section of the floor came up on concealed hinges to reveal a crawl space underneath. The built-in safe on one side was open and empty.

Ohara pictured the scenario: Marty had emptied the safe in a hurry and neglected to shut the trap door . . . the killer saw a quick way out and took it . . . he pulled the trap door down behind him . . . its slightly open edge became just another deep carved line in the tile pattern . . . not easy to detect in a quick search.

Despite this find, the days passed without any real progress. Lugar had not as yet been picked up. All the case evidence produced more questions than answers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A second gun had turned up, a fake gun. The only prints on the barrel were too smudged to be of much use. A few coarse animal hairs had turned up on the rug. Scratches on the chair seat could be claw marks. Yet neighbors had said Glover kept no animals.

The blood smear and prints on the ivory-handled knife were Glover's. The murder weapon had his prints overlaid with others not identifiable.

Photographs showed an indentation about three and a quarter inches wide and seventeen and a quarter inches long in the carpeting beside the desk chair. It could have been made by a heavy briefcase, but no such case was found.

A scrap of bond letter paper on which was printed "ncy Inc. 17" had led nowhere.

The wrinkled red silk was of Japanese origin. It held traces of sweat, grease, food, another of the coarse hairs, and Glover's blood. Ohara could detect a hint of the peculiar odor he'd noticed at the murder scene.

Closing his eyes, he sat back and emptied his mind of all thought. Subtly, into the blankness, his fingers transmitted a sensation, then a memory. He visioned a small boy smoothing the slippery softness of a red silk square. It had a pattern of chrysanthemum crests along the edge.

Looking at the silk in his hand, he noticed a faded chrysanthemum border. His mind began to fill with remembered faces, the faces of Manzanar, the camp where he'd been sent with his family during World War II. He'd been too young to understand why, but he'd known it had something to do with being Japanese American.

Then Ohara saw the face of the man who had made the red silk appear out of an empty box, letting its softness drift over a small boy's hands.

With this enlightenment he solved the riddle of the numbers on the paper scrap. They were part of an address for the Muto Theatrical Agency in Little Tokyo. They booked magic acts. When he interviewed them, they identified the paper as part of a letter they'd sent to clients about auditions for a TV magic special. One name in their old client file was Kendo Satori. Ohara knew him as the man who'd brought a rare pleasure to the Manzanar internees with his magic, and who had become the idol of a small boy named Isamu Ohara.

"It took us quite a while to start up again after Manzanar," Mr. Muto said. "When we did, Satori didn't contact us. I heard he'd had an accident, then later that he had quit magic and was helping

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

someone with an animal act. Too bad! He was one of the best."

Checking Satori's name with police records, Ohara found it mentioned in an investigation of Yakusa activity. Nothing had been proved, but among those questioned was Marty Glover.

He decided to follow the animal act lead. A veterinarian friend referred him to the Lucky J Kennels in the San Fernando Valley, since they often boarded circus animals. The long, dusty drive to Lucky J was worthwhile. Ohara was informed that Satori had boarded his animals there for some time, and still did.

The lone attendant was bursting to tell what he knew. "Two weeks ago," he said, "we were going to sell the critters for back board. Then out of the blue the guy pays his bill and rents space for his brand new trailer and pickup. Said he'd inherited a pile of money."

"Is he here now?" Ohara asked.

"Nope. He heard about Circus Ortega playing in the Valley, and got lucky. He has a fill-in job with them. You can catch the afternoon performance if you get a move on."

The Circus Ortega was pitched in an industrial park in Van Nuys. Ohara had always loved the circus. Smiling, he bought a ticket and went into the tent.

Satori's act was third on the program. From the performer's entrance, a slender, white-haired man in formal dress and white gloves led in three miniature ponies, plumes bobbing on their heads. Satori looked frail, but to the music of a Viennese waltz he guided the little animals through their difficult maneuvers with all the elegance and showmanship Ohara remembered.

Following the ponies, parallel bars were pushed into place. A large ape, probably an orangutan, executed a gymnast's routine with Olympic skill. Next Satori presented a funny clown act with four small dogs. Then, after a drum roll, the ringmaster announced, "Chandu, Master of Magic!"

To Ohara's surprise, the ape, dressed in a red cape and turban, was "Chandu." With Satori as his assistant, he performed a series of small magic illusions, an incredible feat. How had Satori ever trained an ape to do them? It was a tremendous achievement. For a finale, he produced silks from an obviously empty box. The last one, a huge square of red silk, was dropped across Satori's waiting arms. They made their exit to enthusiastic applause.

Ohara sat still a moment, held by the emotion of memory, then he left to enquire where Satori could be found. He was directed to a blue trailer on the back lot. First, he went to his car to pick up his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

briefcase, then he found the blue trailer and knocked. Satori, dressed now in a comfortable *yukata,* opened the door.

Instinctively, Ohara began speaking in Japanese, using the civilized pleasantries demanded by their common heritage. "I knew you a long time ago, at Manzanar," he said. "I was the small boy who helped you with your silks. I thought you were wonderful then. You are more so, now." Ohara wanted the old man to know this before he had to come to the purpose of his visit.

Pleased, Satori invited Ohara inside the trailer, and offered tea from a thermos. The living space was surprisingly small for so large a vehicle. As if he sensed his guest's unspoken question, he said, "This small space does for me. All the rest I converted to transport the animals."

"Chandu was remarkable," Ohara said. "How did you ever train him to do magic?"

Satori's face lit up. "His name is Taka. I raised him from a baby. He was very smart and quick with his hands. He copied everything he saw me do, even putting on clothes and trying to imitate my speech. I gave him some of my old trick equipment to play with and showed him some simple things. He was so clever that I kept teaching him more and more. The result you saw today."

"You should let the scientific community see him. They'd be fascinated by what you've done."

Satori frowned. "No. Taka is not an experiment. He is my child and my friend." Not wanting to appear rude, he smiled and changed the subject. "Tell me, what has little Isamu Ohara done with his life?"

Ohara had dreaded this moment. "I'm a police officer," he said quietly, showing his ID. "Homicide."

Satori tensed, then hurriedly recovered. "Your father would be proud," he said, but his voice was cold. Then, as Ohara put away his ID, he asked, "How did you find me?"

"Actually, through a case I'm on, and through some things found at a murder scene." Ohara opened his briefcase and took out the red silk with its distinctive chrysanthemum border. "I remembered this from Manzanar. And this . . ." he laid down the scrap of letter, "led me to the Muto Agency. They told me about your animal act. I found the animals were boarded at Lucky J ranch. They sent me here."

"Clever," Satori said. "Why did you want to find me? Not for old friends' sake, I think."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not entirely," Ohara answered, inwardly wincing at Satori's skeptical look. "A man named Glover was murdered. The silk was in his hand."

"Are you accusing me of killing him?"

"No," Ohara answered quickly. "You were observed leaving the house before Marty Glover was killed, you and another person, a midget. Why were you there? Was anyone else in the house at the time?"

Satori shrugged. "Glover lends money; I wanted a loan to equip the act for an audition. He threw us out. There was no one else in the house that I could see."

"Apparently you acquired the funds you needed elsewhere," Ohara said, watching Satori's reaction.

"I got an unexpected inheritance." Satori's answer was too quick.

"Satori san," Ohara said, "police records show you were involved with Glover before now, and with Kodomo."

Fear flashed in the old man's face. "I do nothing wrong! I owed Glover money so he made me translate for him with Kodomo. I tell police this when they ask. Do they come again now?"

"No, but what you tell me about Glover may help us find who killed him. Did he have any enemies you know of?"

"Glover was a man to make enemies. Kodomo angry with him."

"And . . ." Ohara waited.

Satori sighed and went on. "When I was sent to the camp at Manzanar, I left most of my magic equipment with a man I knew. When I got out, he'd disappeared. I had to start over with new equipment, develop new illusions, but I had no money. I heard that a man named Marty Glover would give loans without trouble. I was sure I could get work to pay back, but it seemed no one wanted a Japanese magician. I even took a Chinese name, but still no good. Even with janitor work I found I couldn't pay Glover's interest."

Satori's eyes were bleak. "When I didn't pay up, Glover sent two men who broke my hands, as an example for other deadbeats." He held out his bare hands. Ohara, remembering Satori's long, beautiful fingers, ached with pity. Now they were twisted, ugly claws.

"No more magic, ever! I wanted to die." The words were a cry of pain that nothing could ease. He paused, then went on, his voice dull. "An old friend took me in, nursed me, and taught me to help with his animal act. Later, he took sick and when he was dying, he begged me to take care of his animals. His 'little ones,' he called them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I did my best, but the act was old by then; we got no work. I sold everything to board the animals and took what work I could get: delivering handbills, sweeping, anything at all. Taka and I lived in our car. Then one day a friend gave me Muto's letter about the TV audition. I knew it was the break we needed, but I had to have money to dress the act." He shrugged. "So I went to Glover."

Ohara thought of the courage that had taken. "And you brought this along," he said, laying the fake gun on the table beside the red silk.

Satori turned pale. "It's just a stage gun. I was afraid of Glover; it made me feel better to have it." He looked at Ohara anxiously, then went on.

"When I showed him Muto's letter, he tore it up and threw it on the floor. I knelt to pick up the pieces, but he knocked me over with his foot. I tried to pull out the gun, but dropped it. Glover kicked it away. Then I saw he had a gun in his hand. He pointed it at my head. I thought I was a dead man, but he laughed and said, 'I don't need a gun to handle you.' Then he dragged us to the front door and pushed us out."

At that moment the trailer door banged open and "Chandu," the ape, came in. Seeing Satori's visitor, he growled and showed his teeth. Ohara stayed very still. He noted that the ape wore a long coat that covered him from neck to feet. There was a baseball cap on his head. He remembered the stakeout guys' vague description of the midget.

Satori hurried to stand beside Ohara, then addressed the ape. "Taka bad, Taka bad!" Like a child, the ape hung his head, but his eyes, staring from beneath his heavy brows, lost none of their fierceness. He growled softly but did not move.

"He's supposed to be locked in the circus cage," Satori apologized, "but he breaks out whenever he wants to. He's used to living with me." Satori put a hand on Ohara's shoulder. "Friend, Taka!" he said. "Come, shake hands."

Warily, Taka approached and offered his hand.

Ohara clasped the long bony fingers. "Friend, Taka," he said, suddenly aware of the same strange odor he'd noticed at the murder scene.

Taka let go of his hand and reached for the piece of red silk lying on the table. With little squeaks of pleasure he draped it around his neck. Then he spotted the gun, picked it up and stroked it, making soft, crooning sounds.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That's his favorite toy," Satori explained. "In our old act, he shot darts at a target."

Suddenly Taka aimed the gun at Ohara's forehead and pulled the trigger. Ohara's stomach heaved, remembering the ugly hole between Glover's eyes.

Taka looked at the gun, puzzled at Ohara still sitting calmly in his chair, then fired again. Only the small click of the trigger broke the silence. Snorting, he threw the gun away with an expression that could only be disgust. Then his attention was diverted to Ohara's worn briefcase. Pointing at it, Taka grinned and dashed to the door leading to the back of the trailer. He opened it and went through.

Ohara looked at Satori. "Taka went back into Glover's house, didn't he?"

"No . . . I don't know . . ."

"He did," Ohara persisted. "Why?"

Satori looked trapped. "If he did, it was for the gun. He loved it."

"But the gun Taka found was Glover's real gun on the desk," Ohara continued.

"Taka wouldn't kill anyone!"

"I can only guess what happened," Ohara said, "but claw marks on the seat of the desk chair indicate that he stood on it at some point. Glover came in, saw him, and threw the knife at him. It missed and hit the back of the chair. Taka could have been holding the gun, and by reflex fired it into the ceiling. Then Glover went to the desk, grabbed the scarf on Taka's neck as he did before, and twisted it. The silk came off in his fingers. Out of fright, Taka shot at him point-blank."

"You can't prove that," Satori protested.

Before Ohara could say anything else, Taka came back carrying a black briefcase with bright gold fittings. He hugged the handsome case to his chest, his body language plainly saying "This is mine!" Not letting go of the handle, he proudly displayed it for Ohara, who made a show of admiration. The case was an obvious match for the suitcase he'd found in Glover's bedroom. Taka sat down on the floor happily snapping the shiny catches to open and shut the lid. The briefcase was empty. Satori was visibly shaken.

"Tell me the rest of the story," Ohara said gently.

Satori sighed, then said, "When I left Glover's, I looked for Taka but couldn't find him. I knew he'd been beside the porch. When I heard the shots I thought Glover had killed him. I went back to see,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but by then the police were there. I was sick with fear for Taka, but suddenly he came crawling out of the bushes at the side of the house. All I could think of was to get out of there fast. I didn't even notice he had a briefcase."

"A briefcase," Ohara said carefully.

"Yes, that one. I knew Glover wouldn't need it, so I kept it. I felt he owed me something." Satori drew himself up, his face proud. "Now you know the truth. Do what you must."

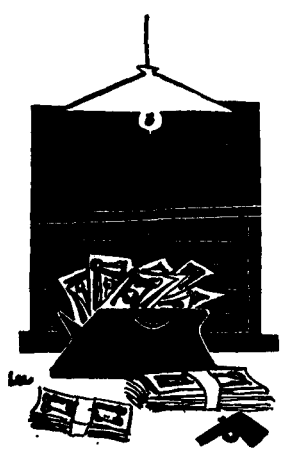
The two men looked at each other across the silence, aware of what had not been mentioned. Finally, Ohara's eyes went to the old man's shattered hands. After a moment he picked up his battered briefcase and stood.

"I think my questions are answered," he said, his voice impersonal. "Thank you. I can report that the two witnesses observed at the scene saw no one inside the house."

Hesitantly, Satori asked, "What . . . what will happen now?"

Ohara smiled. "Probably the case will end up as another unsolved mystery." At the words, Satori could not hold back his tears, but Ohara pretended not to notice. "Goodbye, Taka," he said, holding out his hand. Taka looked up from the briefcase, studied Ohara's outstretched hand, then reached his bony fingers to clasp it. His big teeth showed in his usual loose-lipped grin.

Ohara bowed to Satori, Japanese fashion, as to a respected elder, then went to the door. "Let me know when you do another show," he said, smiling. "I will come again to see you . . . for old friends' sake."



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"WHEN I SEE MY EX-HUSBAND, I HAVE THIS SECRET TRICK I PLAY ON HIM..."

by Leslie McClennahan

Did you ever notice that when you're fat, men don't look you in the eye? They look across your shoulder. There's no eye contact.

My name is Leslie McClennahan. I'm a real person. I live near Goose Creek, South Carolina. Up until two years ago, I was never looked in the eye. By anyone.

I was too tired to be a lover to my husband. I was falling asleep by 8 o'clock most evenings. When I did go out for an evening, my husband was ashamed of me. And said so to my face. When I walked, my thighs brushed together. I couldn't even cross my legs. I was fat. Not just "overweight." Fat. I was 5'5" tall and weighed 205 pounds.

About 18 months ago, my husband Darrell left a "Dear Leslie" letter on my dresser. And filed for divorce.

I went for counseling. I knew that my weight was the source of my troubles. But I'd tried 14 different diets. One by one. And I failed at all of them.

My counselor listened carefully and recommended an entirely different program. This wasn't a "diet." It was a unique new weight-loss program researched by a team of bariatric physicians—specialists who treat the severely obese. The program itself was developed by Robert Johnson, M.D. of Charleston, South Carolina.

I entered the program on October 2nd. Within the first four days, I lost only three pounds. So I was disappointed. But during the three weeks that followed, my weight began to drop. Rapidly. Within the next 193 days, I went from 205 pounds to 124 pounds. To me it was a miracle. This was the first time in my life I'd ever lost weight *and kept it off!*

The reason the program worked was simple. I was *always* eating. I could eat *six times every day*. So I never felt deprived. Never hungry. I could snack in the afternoon. Snack before dinner. I could even snack at night while I was watching T.V.

How can you eat so much and still lose weight?

The secret is not in the amount of food you eat. It's in the *prescribed combination* of foods you eat in each 24-hour period. Nutritionally dense portions of special fiber, unrefined carbohydrates, and certain proteins that generate a calorie-burning process that continues all day long... a complete 24-hour fat-reduction cycle. Metabolism is evened out, so fat is burned away around the clock. Not just in unhealthy spurts like many diets. That's why it lets you shed pounds so easily. Without hunger. Without nervousness.

And it's all good wholesome food. No strange foods. You'll enjoy a variety of meats, chicken, fish, vegetables, potatoes, pasta, sauces—plus your favorite snacks. Even some light wine or beer if you wish.

This new program must be the best kept secret in America. Because, up until now, it's *only been available to doctors*. No one else. In fact, The Charleston Program has been used by 207 doctors in the U.S. and Canada to treat more than 62,500 patients. So it's doctor-tested. And proven. This is the first time it's been available to the public.

There are other benefits too...

- ▷ There are no amphetamines. No drugs of any kind.
- ▷ No pills. No powders. No chalky tasting drinks to mix.
- ▷ There's *no strenuous exercise program*.
- ▷ You don't count calories. Just follow the program. It's easy.
- ▷ There are no daily charts or records to keep.
- ▷ You eat foods you enjoy. Great variety. Great taste.
- ▷ You can dine out.
- ▷ There's much less fluid retention.
- ▷ There's no ketosis. No bad breath odor.

But *here's* the best part...

Once you lose the weight, you'll *keep it off*. Permanently! I guarantee it!

Let's face it. We all have "eating lifestyles." Our eating habits usually include three meals a day. Plus two or three snacks. We all love snacks. Especially at night.

But most diets try to force us to change all that.

And that's why they fail!

The Charleston Program lets you *continue your normal eating lifestyle*. You can eat six times a day. You can snack when you wish. So, when you lose the weight, you can keep it off. For good. Because no one's forcing you to change.

Here are some *other patients* from South Carolina who entered Dr. Johnson's program with me.

Marie C. is a 42-year-old woman who went from 167 to 139 pounds in just three and a half months.

As I got into the program, I began to feel better, to develop more energy. Now my husband has trouble keeping up with me—in every way! I'm proud of my new body.

Dr. Karl D. is a 36-year-old man who went from 275 to 145 in only *six months*!

...words cannot describe how good I feel. I'm not hungry or tired at all. I feel alive again!

Fran H. is a 52-year-old woman who went from 223 to 135 in five months.

The world treats you differently when you're fat... not just the social world, but the business world. My whole world has changed since getting those 88 pounds off!

Josette C. is a 33-year-old woman who went from 165 to 119 in four months.

My husband has started looking at me the way he did before we got married. He's starting to show jealousy when other men look at me or want to talk to me... it's wonderful.

And then there's *me*.

Whenever I see my ex-husband, I have this secret trick I play on him. I know a restaurant where he goes with some of his "buddies." I love to go there with a date—I have plenty now—stroll past his table and whisper, "Hello, Darrell."

I know through the "grapevine" that his friends often ask about me... Who am I?... Am I single? And he has to tell them. I love it.

Obviously I'm excited about the program. This is the first time it's been available outside of a clinical setting. Dr. Johnson has asked Green Tree Press, Inc. to distribute it.

We'll be happy to send you the program to examine for 35 days. Show it to your doctor. Try it. There's *no obligation*. In fact, your check won't be cashed for 31 days. You may even post date it 31 days in advance if you wish.

Choose a day and start the program. If you don't begin losing weight within five days—and continue losing weight—we'll promptly return your *original uncashed check*. No delays. No excuses.

Or keep it longer. Try it for six months. Even then, if you're not continuing to lose weight on a regular basis, you'll receive a full refund. Promptly. And without question. This is the fairest way we know to prove to you how well this new program works.

To order, just send your name, address and postdated check for $12.95 (plus $3.00 shipping/handling) to The Charleston Program, c/o Green Tree Press, Inc., Dept. 271, 3603 West 12th Street, Erie, Pa. 16505.

Green Tree Press is a member of the Erie, Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce. Bank and business references are available upon request.

©1992 Green Tree Press, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ACCOUNT SETTLED

by ANN BAYER

The wife was Scottish, the husband a Yank,
They had no nest egg in the bank.
She was an office temp, he was a clerk,
Both were often out of work.
What this couple had was charm
With which they managed to disarm
Everyone into giving them things—
Theater tickets, country flings,
Even a posh Manhattan apartment
Whose absentee owner charged them no rent.
But though they freeloaded with finesse,
They couldn't bamboozle the IRS.
The two fled to London to evade Uncle Sam,
Which is when I, too, fell for their scam.
"Please lend us a thousand—we'll pay you back
As soon as we find a wee flat and unpack."
I wrote out a check and hugged them goodbye,
Not for a moment suspecting a lie.
Weeks turned into months, months into years,
And meantime the deadbeats remained in arrears.
They'd drop me a postcard from time to time:
"We've bought a house!" "Life is sublime!"
When my pleas went ignored to be reimbursed,
I gnashed my teeth, I cried, I cursed.
One day I awoke with a brilliant notion
And mailed a package across the ocean
Along with a note: "I've canceled your debt.
What's a grand between friends? Let's forgive and forget.
Here is a house gift—" *Tick tock, tick tock—*
"It'll spoil the surprise if I say it's a clock,
But that's what it is, so please open it gently.
If I could afford it, I'd have sent you a Bentley."
Soon across a tabloid it was written:
HOMEMADE BOMB KILLS TWO IN BRITAIN.
"There are no suspects," said Scotland Yard.
Too bad those sleuths forgot the bard.
"Neither a borrower, nor a lender be—"
Or IOU spells you owe me.

© 1992 by Ann Bayer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** **short story by**

RALPH McINERNY

Best known as the creator of Father Dowling, the character upon whom the ABC-TV series of that name was based, Ralph McInerny has contributed more than a dozen novels to the mystery field. His fiction often centers around a concern for the moral nature of the criminal, as in this story, where an innocent action is gradually transformed into a felony by the snowballing self-absorption of the perpetrator . . .

UNFROZEN STIFF

by RALPH McINERNY

Their marriage had survived an unexpected resurgence of sexual desire after the children were away at school and they found themselves alone in the house for months at a time, just the two of them. What strangers they had become with the buffer of three offspring between them. It seemed to Marilyn that she had communicated with Phil only through the children. Of course that wasn't true, but the kids had formed the topic of conversation much of the time, so it *seemed* true. Phil no longer bothered her with unintelligible tales of deals made, bargains discovered, bonuses received. He was successful, she knew that, and the question whether he would be a good provider had been answered long ago. "How the hell does he intend to make a living?" her father asked when told Phil was majoring in English literature. "I suppose he'll teach," her mother suggested, oil upon the waters as always. Marilyn had no idea what Phil would do after graduation. Their love had begun and continued on campus and she simply did not worry what the future would bring. Tangled together in her dormitory bed they seemed to have all they would ever need.

© *1992 by Ralph McInerny.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In senior year, Phil signed up for interviews and was hired by a national food company. "Doing what?" her father had asked. "That's still unclear." Phil's answer, carefree, no worries, though she was pregnant and the wedding wasn't until July, infuriated her father. Not that he knew of her condition. Funny how he had always worried about Phil, yet Phil had moved effortlessly up the corporate ladder while her father stayed just where he had always been, one digit among many in the accounting department, until his retirement. On the way to Sarasota and a leisurely life, her parents had stopped at an Atlanta motel which was set afire during the night by a disgruntled cleaning lady. Dad never collected the pension he had so carefully calculated. Marilyn thought of that when the kids were gone and their own lives seemed to be slipping steadily away. That was when she reached over and tugged at the drawstring of Phil's pajamas. He had fallen asleep while she talked to him and it took her a while to rouse him. "What's wrong?" he asked as he came awake, but she was through talking.

Once they got back to it, they acted like a couple of kids. For a while they used a single bed in Josie's room and it brought back nights in her dormitory.

"Remember Lori?"

"Lori."

"One of my roommates." Lori had hidden in the closet and eavesdropped on one of their sessions. Marilyn had tried to act angry and disgusted but found it retroactively exciting to think of Lori listening to them while they did it.

"What could she hear?"

It was like him to ask that. Marilyn had somehow assumed that Lori was practically a participant in their lovemaking. With his question, Phil casually destroyed one of her memories. But she had long since understood how her father had felt when confronted with Phil's boring matter-of-factness.

That was the beginning of the end of their passionate interlude. Phil began to use the bed off his den on the third floor and Marilyn started to wonder if their friends too had passed beyond that side of marriage.

"I'd rather read a book," Lori said on the long-distance phone. "And not the one about the ninety-three different positions. Jim only learned one and he was lousy at that."

Of course Lori had divorced Jim and was committed to seeing marriage as hell. Marilyn also learned that Lori was finding life on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her own hard. "My lawyer said we'd take him to the cleaners, but she lost on every count." Jim was months behind on the pittance he was supposed to pay her. It was unwise to get Lori started on the subject of women lawyers. "I'm working, Marilyn. Clerking in a department store." And from seven hundred miles away the sound of Lori weeping filled Marilyn's ear. It did not seem a good time to ask what she had really heard the time she hid in the closet. But then the resumption of sex ran its course and they were in different beds and different rooms. Obviously it was a myth that men cannot live without it.

The day Marilyn refused to drive Phil to the airport for a seven o'clock flight she stayed in bed until ten. Not that she got back to sleep. Her head was ahum with his accusations.

"You never do a damned thing for anyone else," he said, standing beside her bed, looking down at her like the angel of the last judgment.

She just glared up at him.

"Nothing but what you want to do. You're selfish!"

She listened to him thump down the stairs. He had made his own breakfast and the aroma of coffee was like a rebuke. The door slammed. A minute later, his car roared into life. He seemed to be gunning the motor accusingly beneath her windows. More likely he was just warming it up against the winter cold.

She lay there, wishing sleep would return, assuring herself that she wasn't selfish. It was Phil who was selfish, wanting her to get out of her warm bed to drive him to the plane. It was no inconvenience for him to leave his car at the airport.

Finally, she gave up and got out of bed. Phil had succeeded in ruining her day. It was ridiculous to call her selfish. She had raised her children, kept this house, been a good wife to Phil. He should want her to sleep in now that it no longer mattered. She wasn't selfish, he was.

She sat at the kitchen table, sipping coffee Phil had made, carrying on the inner debate. It was almost a relief when she thought that the stores were just opening. It seemed to give point to her day and justify her refusal to do Phil a favor. Oh, she knew how he hated to leave his car in the airport lot, exposed to the weather. Besides, it was always such a long walk from the car to the terminal. No wonder he preferred to be dropped off at the entrance where he could check his suitbag and proceed with only his briefcase. As the doors slid open, he would turn and wave, good old carefree Phil. They were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

almost close again whenever he set out on a business trip. That was why his anger this morning was so upsetting. She had pulled away from him, into herself, and expected him to stay just as he was.

Snow fell softly at the windows and she watched it as she brushed her hair, mesmerized. She thought of it settling on Phil's parked car. It would be covered after a few hours of this and the weather could get worse during the two days he would be gone. What Phil called being selfish had become her theory of life. She had been a good wife and mother, her children were raised, now she would spend her days pleasing herself. Her whole life had been one of self-denial, she had always put the kids first, and Phil, giving no thought to herself. What had become of *her?*

Would she want to separate herself completely from her past, as Lori had done? That, as Wilfred, her professor son-in-law, might say, was the inner logic of her life. Maybe, but it remained inner, an attitude she cultivated rather than any radical rearrangement of her life, of their lives. Things could just go on as before, only different. It seemed part of the natural evolution of things. So why did she feel guilty?

At the mall she parked and walked toward the entrance. Ahead of her, a woman in jeans and an open jacket, leaning over to hold the hand of one child who held the hand of another, and so on, four in all, was moving with great caution across the parking lot, warning her charges to be careful, hang on tight. Four saucered pairs of eyes looked up at Marilyn as she went by. It brought it all back, how life had been when the kids were little. At the entrance, she waited, thinking she would hold the door for the woman to get her brood through, but they had made so little progress she decided against it. Any woman who would take four toddlers to the mall should be able to negotiate the door. But twenty feet inside, Marilyn stopped and looked back. She did not move until she saw that the woman was safely inside with her four children.

The incident seemed another mark against her. For two hours she shopped, ridding her mind of accusing thoughts. Finally, before leaving the mall, she stood at the window of a pet store and looked at a puppy frisking about in the shredded paper. When the children were young, Marilyn had put her foot down whenever a pet was mentioned. She had troubles enough without a dog to look after. A cat? She didn't like cats. This puppy was cute and she imagined having it to care for, someone to talk to. She dismissed the thought. It would tie her down.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She walked on but stopped to look back. Why did she feel she was abandoning that little dog? Of course it was Phil's remark, haunting her still. Selfish, selfish.

Outside, snow was falling heavily now, and in the parking lot cars furred with snow seemed to huddle against the cold. A fat old man stood shivering on the curb, a baseball cap askew on his head, hands thrust deep into the pockets of a sateen jacket. He looked at her, looked away, looked back again.

"When's that bus due?"

"Does it stop here?" Marilyn didn't know. She never rode a bus.

"Don't it?" He looked at her as if she had rerouted the bus and was responsible for his discomfort. What an ornery old fellow he seemed, as ornery as Phil that morning.

"Can I drop you someplace?"

He had taken his ungloved hands from his pockets and was hugging himself.

"You mean it?"

"Where are you going?"

He was headed downtown where he would catch another bus. Marilyn said, "Come on," and started toward her car but he didn't follow. When she turned, he seemed obese and old and vulnerable. "Wait there. I'll bring the car."

She felt like a girl scout. She felt that she was refuting Phil. For the first time that day, she felt content with herself.

She started the car, then got out to brush snow from it, looking toward the man still shivering outside the mall entrance. She was almost afraid the bus would come or someone else offer him a lift. She got in and put the car in gear, letting the wipers sweep the snow from the windshield.

She drew up to the curb and beeped the horn, then leaned across and pushed the door open. Rheumy old eyes looked down at her from under the bill of the cap.

"Get in."

Wariness left him and he stepped down from the curb, carefully, and then got into the car with much huffing and puffing. He lifted his legs in as if they were not part of him. When he pulled the door shut, it didn't latch. She reached across him and opened and closed it again, hard.

"Buckle your seat belt," she said.

He didn't know how and she had to help him. Now that he was in the car, he accepted her attention without comment, as if it were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

owed him. It was like having a child in the passenger seat.

"No one told me it was going to snow," he said, a querulous note in his high voice. He seemed to shiver more inside the car.

"It will take a moment for the heater."

She pulled away and was conscious that the pavement was slippery. The mall exit put her onto a very busy highway leading to town. Cars barreled along, indifferent to snow and the loss of traction, and Marilyn, tense behind the wheel, was aware of the rasping breathing of her passenger. Now she regretted her generous impulse. "Look at that goddam fool," he said of a car that, having passed them, swung into the lane in front of her and then tried to slow suddenly. The braking caused the rear end of the car to swerve, and for a breathless moment Marilyn was sure he was going to spin out and take a dozen others with him into paradise. But the driver regained control. Marilyn realized that her heart had been in her throat. She hated to drive in such conditions and the thought of taking this old man all the way downtown irritated her.

He sat upright, popeyed and gasping. His hands gripped the seat as he leaned forward, apprehensive and eager. The least they could do was talk.

"How long does it take you to get to the mall?"

"They drop me off there." He spoke rapidly, as if unwilling to be distracted from the perils of the road.

She did not ask who "they" were. His voice sounded like Phil's that morning, and she had the sense that this act of kindness restored the moral balance of her life. It was inconvenient enough just driving this old man downtown, but she resolved to take him to his door.

"Where do you live?"

"Downtown's fine," he said, shaking his head. "This kind of weather I'd rather be in a bus." His breath seemed to come in shorter gasps.

What an obnoxious old man. She should have left him freezing at the bus stop—if it *was* a bus stop.

"You're not dressed very warmly."

"I go there for the exercise." She noticed that he was wearing sneakers. It was a cliché, old people in sweatshirts and jogging costumes walking as vigorously as they could through malls before the stores opened. He gave out a kind of laugh. "That's the idea anyway. I just sit on a bench and watch the others."

He could use the exercise. When she buckled him in she had been aware of his massive stomach. He breathed with his mouth open,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and noisily. Did whoever brought him to the mall consider it a good deed, a way of keeping the old man in shape?

The car that had pulled ahead of her was trying in vain to pass other cars, but the left lane was solid with traffic. The driver nosed to the left and then to the accompaniment of an angry horn resumed his place ahead of Marilyn. He began to switch his lights on and off, doubtless trying to get the car ahead of him to go faster. Marilyn's passenger kept up a profane commentary on these antics, but she felt that he was including her in his condemnation. Suddenly, the red warning lights of the car ahead lit up and Marilyn put on her brakes. For a moment nothing happened, and then the car went out of control. She spun the wheel in the direction of the swerve, unsure if that was right; the car corrected itself, and then slid in the opposite direction. Beside her the old man was shouting. She worked furiously and finally regained control. Meanwhile, the car that had caused all this had picked up speed and was far ahead in the swirling snow. Marilyn relaxed and glanced at her passenger.

He had fallen back in his seat, the bill of his cap now covered his eyes, his hands had eased their grip on the seat. His stomach rose and fell with his noisy breathing.

"Are you all right?"

But she had to watch the road. The old man cried out and then began to gasp and gag. The car seemed enveloped in snow, with mad motorists all about.

"I'll get out of this as soon as I can."

No answer. She hardly dared take her eyes off the road. When she did look, he was pressed back against the seat, motionless. She reached over and tipped back his cap. His eyes were glassy and staring. Her attention went back to the road. She realized that she no longer heard the rasping sound of his breathing. She glanced at him again, with dread.

"I'll go to a hospital," she said, realizing she did not know his name.

There was no answer. She did not expect one. She knew her passenger was dead, undone by the excitement of the traffic.

Marilyn looked out her window, then into the rearview mirror. What in God's name should she do? She screamed at the old man, took one hand from the wheel and pushed at him angrily, then cried out when he slumped toward the door. He had to be still alive. He couldn't be dead. What was she to do with the dead body of an old man she did not even know?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The question stayed with her despite the distraction of the unnerving driving conditions. She seemed surrounded by drivers determined to show that winter driving held no terrors for them. As soon as she could, she got off the highway, turning onto a county road along which few cars had driven since snow began to fall.

The road bulged in the center and she felt she could easily slip off into the ditch. Imagine, being stranded on this road with a dead old man in the car. She slowed considerably, keeping an eye on the rearview mirror, and pulled the old man upright. How heavy he was. There was no sign of life.

She could take him back to the mall where she had got him, but what would she do with him there? It made as much sense to take him downtown to the transfer point where there were shelters and she might be able to get him into one and prop him up. He would be discovered there and for all anyone knew he had taken the bus from the mall and then had a stroke as he waited for his transfer.

It gave her a destination anyway, but first she had to turn around and go back. She came to a driveway which led to a house far off the road, slowed carefully, and turned in. Her car dipped forward and seemed to sink beneath her. The descent was much steeper than she had thought and she was unsure where precisely the unshoveled driveway was. Its borders were only vaguely visible beneath the snow. She had hoped to turn in, then back right out onto the road again, but that was out of the question. She crept up the driveway, peering ahead at the house. What would she do if someone looked out, or even came outside, and saw the dead old man in the passenger seat? The house was an L-shaped ranch, and she would have to pull up to the closed garage doors on the short leg before she dared turn around. Slowly she approached the house, her eyes alert for any movement at the windows, any sign that she was observed. How could she avoid being seen? Anyone living in so isolated a house would be aware of a car coming in the drive. But she did not dare speed toward the house. The car was barely moving as she approached the garage doors, but when she braked, the tires did not hold and the car began to slide. It was eerie, slow-motion; her foot depressed the brake pedal to the floor, yet she still slid toward the closed doors. Her bumper actually touched the doors as the car came to a stop.

She cried out in relief, put the car in reverse and turned around. On the way out of the driveway, following the tracks she had made coming in, she did not dare look back to see if someone was at a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

window, baffled, perhaps noting her license number.

From the left, as she neared the road, a truck approached, pushing a great cloud of snow before it. She took her foot off the gas and let her car come to a halt twenty-five yards short of the road. Marilyn sat back, not wanting to be seen, but her passenger was leaning as far forward as his seat belt would permit. He might have been eager to watch the truck with plow attached clear the road.

When the truck was past, Marilyn gunned the motor and shot up the incline to the road, bursting through the ridge of snow the plow had made, and turned toward the highway she had recently left. It would take her either back to the mall or downtown. But long before she reached it, she knew she could neither return to the mall nor go downtown to the bus transfer point. In either place there would be people around and . . . And what? She could ask for help, say the old man had suffered a stroke, have someone call an ambulance. But wouldn't they know the old man had not just died? She wasn't sure. The fact that she had been driving him around for, what, ten, fifteen minutes since he had died, seemed a species of crime. She should have stopped right in the middle of the highway and cried out for help. Oh, sure. Cars would have skidded into one another for a mile, she would have caused one of the worst accidents the area had ever known.

When she reached the highway, she turned north, toward the mall, not because she meant to stop there but because she did not want to drive into town with the body beside her. She should have just dumped him out on the county road! He was dead, she couldn't hurt him. When he was found it would be thought he had started walking from the mall and become lost in the snow and . . .

That was crazy. The snowplow would come back, the driver would remember her car, so would the people whose driveway she had used. She beat on the wheel with her gloved fist. She had to get rid of the body. She was liable, she told herself. He had died in her car and his family would sue her for—she didn't know what for, only that any relatives of this ornery old man would blame her. The way Phil blamed her. This whole crazy thing was Phil's fault. If he hadn't nagged her before leaving, she would never have offered the old man a lift. She had gotten into this just to prove she wasn't selfish. All because of Phil.

And then she knew what she would do.

She did stop at the mall, in a parking lot that was all but empty, where she strapped the old man in as tightly as the belt permitted,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

settled his cap on his head, pulling it down over the staring eyes. Then she set off again.

The weather had shut down the airport and there was little traffic on the road leading to the terminal. One taxi waited forlornly under the overhang. "Here we are," Marilyn told her silent partner, pulling into the long-term parking. She lowered the window and a spray of snow blew in. Her wrist emerged from her sleeve as she reached out to press the button and get her ticket. The stile rose slowly and she drove into the lot.

Rows and rows of cars, capped with snow, stretched before her. She drove slowly up an aisle between two rows of cars, the wipers going back and forth, back and forth. Would she be able to recognize Phil's car buried under snow? Some license plates were visible. The number on his plate was one higher than hers. She would find his car. She had to. She was determined to. She would show him.

For twenty minutes, she drove up and down between the rows of cars, twenty aisles in all, and did not find Phil's car. It had to be here. It was here. It was just that she couldn't recognize it, covered with snow. As she drove, she spoke to her passenger.

"You're here because of what he said to me this morning, so let him figure out what to do with you. What am I supposed to do, drive into Emergency and say I've got a dead man for delivery? There would be questions, it would be in the paper. I couldn't stand that. I would be blamed. Your people would sue me. Everybody sues everybody nowadays. It's not my fault. I wish now I were as selfish as Phil thinks. I never would have offered you a ride and I would be home now, safe and warm."

She was crying with frustration and anger. This was so unfair.

"If I have to, I'll just prop you up beside any car and . . ."

But she had spotted Phil's car. She was positive it was his. Half the license plate was visible and the numerals she saw were the right ones. She stopped and got out. Wind whipped at her and snow stung her face and she narrowed her eyes against it. She wiped the plate clean. It was Phil's car.

She had to go back to hers for the keys and turn off the ignition to remove them. On her ring was a set of keys for Phil's car. She brushed snow away from the lock and opened the trunk. It looked dry and deep and warm. She turned and opened the passenger door of her car.

* * *

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You should have gone into short-term parking," the attendant said when she handed him her ticket.

"I made a mistake."

"A two dollar mistake."

She was happy to pay it. She drove home grim-faced, glad she had done it. Phil usually put his bags in the trunk. She would like to see the look on his face when he unlocked it.

"How was the trip?" she asked two days later. She didn't even know where he had been and had decided against calling his office to ask Miss Wilshire. A wife should know where her husband was. She'd been waiting up for him, napping on the couch. He put down his suitbag and briefcase. She sat up, looking at him, but he was just a tired man home from a trip.

"Great," he said, removing his tie.

"Phil, I'm sorry I didn't drive you to your plane."

He seemed to have forgotten. When he remembered he shook his head. "It's a good thing you didn't. I wouldn't want you driving around in this kind of weather."

She felt awful. Ever since she put the body of the old man in the trunk of Phil's parked car, she'd regretted it. She tried to imagine it hadn't really happened. How could she possibly do a thing like that? It was a terrible dream. Now here he was and not a word about it. He must have put his things in the back seat rather than the trunk, because of the snow.

"Have you eaten?"

"On the plane."

"I could fix you something."

He wasn't hungry. She pestered him with uncharacteristic questions about his trip. Phil would have much preferred to read the paper, watch the news, but she couldn't shut up. She was sure he would have said something, revealed something, if he had found the body. She could not rid her mind of the thought of that old fat man lying dead in the trunk of Phil's car. At eleven-thirty he stood and yawned. Marilyn had half a mind to suggest that they go up together, to her room, but decided against it. Not tonight. Perhaps tomorrow. Tonight she could not sleep until she checked the trunk of Phil's car. She was not rid of that old man's body yet.

Later, after she opened the garage with the remote control, she sat on before the television, not really watching it, waiting to see if the sound of the garage door lifting had wakened Phil. She waited

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

twenty minutes before she slipped out to the garage, put her key into the lock of his trunk, and hesitated. She closed her eyes and lifted the door. Then she looked. The trunk was empty.

Her first thought was that the old man had been a bad dream, a nightmare, a phantasy. She leaned forward to see if there was any sign that a body had lain in the trunk. She found none. She closed the trunk and then the door of the garage and hurried back inside.

Upstairs, in stocking feet, she crept through the den and looked in at Phil. He was fast asleep. Confused, Marilyn went to her own bed where she lay sleepless for hours. Had she put the old man in the wrong car? But Phil's keys wouldn't open another car. Had the old man come to, managed to lift the trunk door and escape? But she had closed the trunk firmly.

In the morning she overslept. Phil was gone. The first thing she did was to look out at the closed garage door. She pressed the remote control and opened it but of course Phil's car was gone. She would have liked to check the trunk again. She no longer trusted her senses or her memory. Had she imagined looking into the trunk or imagined the old man dying in the passenger seat of her car?

The telephone rang. It was the service department of the agency from which they bought their cars. They could fit her in at eleven.

"Fit me in?"

"Lube, rotate the tires, check the oil."

"Today?"

"Lady, you don't want it done today, say so. I'm just trying to be accommodating."

She told him she'd be there. The agency would give her a loaner, so she could do the errands she had planned. By the time she left her car in the bright, warm, cavernous garage of the maintenance department, she had added another errand. She was going to surprise Phil with a present, something extravagant.

She spent an hour and a half at the jeweler's, but she couldn't decide. She liked an onyx ring, but would Phil wear it?

"Why don't you bring him in?" The jeweler had a pink complexion and a little halo of hair. Glasses sat halfway down his knobby nose.

"It's a surprise."

"Bringing him here can be the surprise."

"Let me telephone."

Phil had gone to lunch. Could she speak with his secretary? Two minutes later she was told Miss Wilshire too had gone to lunch. Marilyn decided she would have lunch herself and stop by Phil's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

office afterward. She was determined to make up for the awful trick she had meant to play on him.

She went to the Madison Grill, where she would have suggested to Phil that they go, but there wasn't a table available.

"You could wait in the bar." The suggestion was made as if she would refuse, but why should she go elsewhere? She was in no hurry.

Phil was seated at a small table in a corner of the crowded bar, Miss Wilshire across from him. They leaned toward one another, their heads all but touching, their knees intermingled. His hand, the one on which she had imagined an onyx ring, lay on one of Miss Wilshire's. There was no mistaking the significance of the scene.

Marilyn left the bar, retrieved her coat, went out into the street. The mood of contrition that had gripped her since leaving the body of the old man in Phil's trunk was entirely gone. She hated him. She would make him pay. She would take him for everything he had. And then she remembered Lori and felt like crying.

Her mood had passed from anger to self-pity to confusion when she went to pick up her car. The huge door came down behind the loaner after she had driven in. She got out of the car. Work seemed to stop. Mechanics looked up from their tasks. Marilyn saw her car parked away from the others. A police officer stood beside it. The manager holding a clipboard approached.

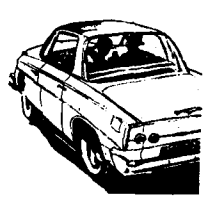
"The blue '89 Oldsmobile Ciera?"

"Is it ready?"

"When's the last time you opened your trunk?"

Behind the manager, another man waited for her answer. She looked around. Everyone was waiting for her to speak. The officer put his hand on the trunk of her car. And then she understood. The checkup of her car had been arranged. Phil must have called and asked for the appointment and had the agency phone her. The body of the old man had not disappeared after all.

"The trunk? I've never opened the trunk." And then she had it, a way to save herself and do in Phil. "It's my husband's car," she said. "Is something wrong?"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A story about bravado and courage, daring and heroism. . . .

MOVING TARGET

by MORRIS HERSHMAN

"I guess it won't be long before I meet your whole family."

"That's right, honey. Absolutely."

Only two hours ago, after four months in a deepening relationship, Lou Diamond had proposed marriage and been happily accepted. Now he was with Freya in her apartment, celebrating over an impromptu take-out meal. It was true that he liked to eat kosher at his home or somebody else's for celebrating important occasions, and Italian in a restaurant for putting a legal deal together, but he'd flipped for Chinese take-out after sex, and that's what the two of them were eating now.

"Your mother is a darling and so are your uncles and aunts." For the first time since accepting him, Freya looked quizzical. "Your brother hasn't been home even once on the three times you brought me over."

"Sid is out of town a lot." Lou had been saying almost exactly those words for the best part of a year whenever anybody asked about Sid. Having to repeat them to her made him feel edgy, as if there were sand between his teeth.

Freya was in no mood to be totally serious. "I'll bet your brother is really in jail and you don't want to tell me."

"Well, it slipped my mind till now, but next month I'll take you up to see Sid and you can bring him a cake with a hatchet inside."

He would have sworn he was using those self-confident tones that fooled judges and lawyers in court as well as rattling witnesses on the other side of an action. This time the buttery tones must have been pierced by some unintended inflection.

Freya became briefly reflective. "If there does turn out to be any problem about your brother, I'd never forgive you for not trusting me about it."

© 1992 by Morris Hershman.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Before lying like a trooper one more time, he gave a hearty smile. "And who else do you think is going to be my best man?"

Whether or not Freya was convinced, she changed her mood to fit his, teasing, "At least I've got something I can look forward to."

Lou rose to the bait, making believe he was angry, and chased her around the place until she fell into bed, where there was no refuge for her at all.

He took her to Mom's apartment on West Seventy-eighth Street off Columbus Avenue, calling out the good news as soon as they hurried inside. Mom congratulated them and kissed up a storm. Pausing only briefly to commiserate with Freya over not having close relatives with whom to celebrate, she planted herself on the phone and began trumpeting the happy news to different uncles and aunts, then to friends with unmarried children.

Telling their own friends was easy enough over the next days. As soon as the wedding date was confirmed for the third Sunday in September, plans were made for a bachelor party and bridal shower.

Freya, tactful to the fingertips, bless her, though largely enjoying herself, didn't say word one about Lou's older brother, who had been nowhere in sight.

It was Lou's turn to make the once-a-month phone call, and on the third of August, at eight o'clock in the evening, he stepped over to the usual public phone booth on Madison Avenue in the Sixties, near his apartment, and put the call through. He used cash instead of traceable credit. As usual, the phone was picked up on the second ring in a public place in a Long Distance calling area—in Milwaukee, as he happened to know only because of the 414 exchange.

Sid started talking first, as he always did on these monthly phone calls. Having asked after Mom and a few stray relatives, he turned the talk to Lou and cheered lustily at the good news.

"Wait a minute, though." He lowered his voice before Lou's ears gave out. "Did you tell the girl—uh, Freya—about me?"

"Uh-uh." He'd hardly have known how to explain that Sid Diamond, once the nerviest and most impudent sportswriter on the prestige-loaded staff of the *New York Times,* had daringly testified as an eyewitness to Tomasino D'Arpa's killing of a boxer for not taking a dive on schedule. Not even Sidney J. Diamond could run that risk without being tossed into the witness protection program

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the U.S. Justice Department to save his life. The federal marshals had fitted him with a new identity and set him up beyond the reach of D'Arpa's successors in the Mob. "I'm a new man," Sid liked to say once a month. Ruefully, though, always ruefully.

"You'd better drop this story on Freya as soon as possible," Sid felt he had to advise his younger brother. "I know the whole family figured I'd get home soon and nobody'd have to know about this, but the marshal on my case finally got around to telling me flat out I can never hope to go back to my old life." The wires seemed to be humming with his regret, his anger. "You can imagine how much I'd like to be there when my younger brother crosses the finish line."

"I know." But Lou suddenly felt exhilarated. Had he heard those take-a-chance tones which were followed over the years by a neighbor's door covered with graffiti, parking tickets never accounted for, a cargo of drinks with no sour after effects? "Are you coming?"

"Well, you know I've been told I can't ever stick my nose into the Big Apple again."

For a second Lou felt as if he were still attending Columbia, with Sid shrugging off risks and ending up ahead.

But all that Sid said, and with an airiness that Lou happily remembered, too, was, "Don't worry about a thing, kid. Just keep cool and kiss Freya for me."

Even while Lou was opening his mouth for one of those cheery encouraging sidebars he could handle so neatly in a courtroom, Sidney J. Diamond gave a long breath and gently broke the connection.

Freya was deep in conversation with a pair of cousins that evening when a strung-out Lou reached her apartment. It sounded as if she was trying to match the girls with prospective husbands from a pool of Lou's single friends. He couldn't help thinking, a little sadly, that she'd have her work cut out for her.

Briskly he told Freya the truth about Sid almost as soon as the cousins left, and told her why he hadn't brought up the matter till now.

"You didn't think I'd walk away because there's something unpleasant in your family situation—or did you think that, Lou?"

He fudged the answer by taking Freya into his arms and kissing her bright red hair and long swan-neck. Not till they were finished making love did it occur to him that he hadn't mentioned Sid's possibly coming to the wedding after all. Thinking it over in this blessed post-coital haze, it seemed like one secret he could safely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keep. If there was going to be a surprise, the best one to deliver it was the former Wild Man of De Witt Clinton High School in the Bronx. If anybody could get the better of a pack of hoodlums and have a wonderful time doing it, that was the one-and-only Sid.

Lazily he listened to Freya telephoning down for Chinese take-out.

He picked up the outdoor phone at eight o'clock on the third night of September, having waited, as usual, for ring number two.

"There'll be plenty of people at your wedding I'd like to see again, kid. Mom, if nobody else." Sid had brought up the subject.

"And I'd want you for my best man."

"That'd be great if it were possible. Truth is, I talked to the marshal out here about breaking out for one day only, but he told me there'd been so many cutbacks in the Service that he couldn't guard me himself or send somebody else."

"Then I guess that's the answer. I can't ask you to maybe throw your whole future down the toilet just for one afternoon ceremony."

"What I've been thinking, though, is that I never yet missed a family occasion, and I never yet disappointed my kid brother."

"I *knew* you'd—"

"It would be fun to go in there and make believe I'm just another guest, and see everybody's face."

"That'll be great!"

"Let me sleep on it a few more nights, maybe till the last minute. But I wouldn't be surprised if I take a deep breath and we can celebrate putting one over on the goddam Mob, and the Wild Man shows up after all."

Lou had been bothered all along by knowing that no close relative of Freya's was going to be at the wedding. A younger half-brother had died of crib death, her mother was dead these last seven years, and her father hadn't been heard of since the day after Freya's first birthday. A gratifying surprise awaited him.

His fiancée was flushed and unusually animated even for her when she answered her door to him on the Saturday evening a week before the wedding. She opened the door wide, happily showing a middle-aged stranger who rose quickly to his feet.

"This is my father," she said with contentment.

"I saw the wedding announcement and picture of both of you in the *Times*," Norman White explained for his benefit after the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

obligatory firm handshake and congratulatory words. "I recognized Freya, of course, because she looks so much like her mother. As soon as possible, I hurried out to be here."

White was a dapper fifty-year-old in English-made clothes and Italian shoes. It was easy to see how a man so self-possessed could win his daughter's forgiveness, as he was clearly prepared to leave at the first argument. He hadn't apologized for past contemptible behavior, saying only, "A man has to play out his string." He didn't trot out memories of Freya as a baby, and he shrugged forbearance when his daughter produced color photographs of a younger man awkwardly holding Baby Freya in his arms. He certainly wasn't so crass as to introduce a word or two of Yiddish into conversation with a near-stranger by way of proving that he was a member of the same ethnic club. Unwilling to ingratiate himself, he remained a pleasant and even cosmopolitan gent who also happened to be a runaway father.

"I think that the two of you should let me pay wedding expenses," he suggested mildly.

He ended up by taking over the share that Freya had originally insisted on contributing, the money for the synagogue rental, half the cost of the wedding reception at Guglielmo's Restaurant on East Thirty-second in the Murray Hill district, and the open bar as well as the six-man orchestra.

"Norman, I hope you'll visit after we settle in," the prospective son-in-law said, preparing to leave them to resume talking by themselves. "You'll be more than welcome, I'm sure, whenever you get to New York."

"We'll see."

Freya was showing signs of returning to normal, accepting her father as a visiting blood relative who'd never wanted much to do with her. It was the attitude that Norman White discreetly and wisely encouraged. A nagging irritation had been removed, though, permitting the wedding to proceed more routinely and acceptably.

It occurred to Lou on the way home that a particular worry might solve itself, too. Why shouldn't Sid be able to come to the wedding and have a good time and go back to his new home? A burst of fresh confidence, of his best courtroom manner of behaving as if he could kick an armored tank and destroy it, told him that everything was going to be all right.

* * *

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He had been expecting a raucous bachelor dinner full of bad jokes about sex. It turned out to be a meal donated by serious well-wishers at a Swedish restaurant deep in Yorkville. He was advised to buy a co-op, buy a condo, rent until he could buy in the suburbs. He was told, too, that mortgage rates remained a tad high. He was warned that advertising agencies like the one that employed Freya were retrenching, and big firms were not only dropping young lawyers like himself but offering early retirement to full partners. One friend told him somberly that shopping out of state, by mail if necessary, was better than facing New York's dreaded eight-and-a-quarter percent sales tax. Thad Danaher assured him, as if intoning a eulogy, that the best way to get first-class repair work done in an apartment or a house was to offer good beer and good grass to the repair people.

Sid, the Wild Man, would have rescued this party the way he had done with so many others. Well, he'd get his chance at the wedding itself and the reception afterwards, and he'd shine. Trust Sidney J. Diamond for that.

Lou started to worry all over again on Sunday morning before he was due to leave for the wedding. Driving with an usher over to the synagogue, he found himself looking right and left as if he expected to see his brother hurrying up Broadway to the temple.

He greeted friends and other guests from the minute he reached the sturdy building that housed the West End Synagogue of Manhattan. Freya was a longtime congregant and had already spoken to the rabbi about the ceremony, which hadn't been rehearsed, but Lou had not even been inside the synagogue, and as soon as he changed into a rented tux he went upstairs to clear up a few points. It didn't take long, and he felt sorry Freya wasn't with him.

He found her in a dressing room looking typically beautiful, this time in pearly white. As soon as he approached, the bridesmaids scattered, giggling, and the couple embraced gingerly.

"Seeing each other before the wedding is supposed to be bad luck, dear."

He laughed it off, hiding his sudden relief. It had crossed his mind that Sid might have come over to introduce himself to his sister-in-law, but Freya would have mentioned it right away.

He parted unwillingly from her and walked toward the building entrance. Standing next to a placard designed to let everybody know about the progress of the Building Fund, he shook hands with male

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

newcomers and bussed the women. He had wondered if Sid might get himself up in some disguise, but not as one of Mom's generation of friends or his and Freya's co-workers. He made a point of extending handshakes with black as well as Japanese and Chinese guests, vividly remembering his own discomfiture at a wake for a young friend's father, where the customs had been unfamiliar to him, and particularly how he'd had the hardest time knowing what to do with his hands.

Turning away at the first lull in the pace of new arrivals, he saw Freya's father in back of him, metallic eyes fixed on the entrance. Probably he, too, wanted out of this.

Lou pointed out amiably, "The jacket is a little crumpled."

Norman White looked down at what might have been a bulge on the left side of his dark wool suit, having refused to put on a tux. Snappishly, he pulled the jacket down.

"That fixes it." And he turned away so that his left side was no longer in Lou's sight.

But the lay of the jacket made it clear that nothing had been changed. Suggesting that White take something out of his jacket pocket would be the worst of bad manners, especially in dealing with a touchy customer like Freya's runaway father.

Harry Kestenbaum, one of the ushers, was smiling when he approached from the auditorium and gestured smilingly in the same direction.

Uncle Boomie had been elected best man, ferrying Lou down the aisle with the four ushers. Lou walked slowly when he wanted nothing more than to run, and looked left and right. His brother wasn't a witness, but now he expected Sid to walk in at the finish of the ceremony and start cheering for him and Freya. It would be just like Sid to draw attention to himself and never cause hard feelings.

He mounted two steps to the dais and stood left of the varicolored canopy, hardly thinking about the limp jokes made quietly by the ushers or piano music that sounded the way a toothache felt. Like Norman White, and probably Freya, he wanted this to be over and out.

The tempo of the music became more stately and the volume increased. Freya had appeared at long last, her features appropriately serious but eyes glinting merrily. She winked at him as they exchanged glances, and Lou had all he could do to keep from cracking up.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He succeeded because his attention had been drawn to Norman White's dark jacket. It remained partly lifted on the left by the bulge still in place. After Lou's remark a few minutes ago, somebody more sensitive would have taken out whatever called such attention to itself.

No, the bulge wasn't *in* the jacket, Lou realized when he looked down. It was under the jacket, almost certainly between the lining and that snowy white shirt.

Even harder to accept, in these circumstances, was the jacket being unbuttoned. A fashionable two-button with the bottom clear he might have shrugged off, but neither button was done. White may have been prickly, but he knew how to dress when, and here he was taking his daughter down the aisle to be married while disregarding every iron rule.

It didn't make sense.

Uh-uh, not true. It made sense, but Lou was having a hard time admitting as much to himself.

It had to be that the left side of White's jacket was hiding what the man wouldn't remove at anybody's urging, in this case a shoulder holster with a revolver. What other answer was possible?

And it stood to reason that White was no member of the U.S. Marshal's office who had come to protect Sid. If that were the case, Sid would have showed up already, and White would have prepared Lou by saying so in confidence at one of several opportunities.

White—not his real name, and damn him under any name!—must be on the other side, sent to dispose of Sid in case he showed himself.

And what in hell's name was he going to do about it now of all times? It had to be handled right away without an arrest and trial and sentencing, no appeal, no chance of reversal. Wasn't it possible that Sid might finally come charging into this happy scene—and be mashed by a hail of steel?

Suppose Lou shouted out and stopped his own wedding. The man who called himself Freya's father would insist that he always carried a gun for business reasons. Nobody would be able to take the weapon from him. Nothing would have been changed.

Something else. Call it training, but part of him cried out for proof about what he knew, evidence, even the grungiest kind of circumstantial evidence. It had to be plain before Louis I. Diamond summoned up that fabled courtroom confidence of his.

White was coming closer, and it might be possible to reach across and knock the gun away. The longest of long shots, but worth a try.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As there had been no wedding rehearsals, though, he hadn't expected the man to step aside as soon as Freya reached the bottom step to the dais, and sit down quietly some half a dozen seats from Mom.

Quick . . . and the plan came when it was needed, the man meeting the hour.

He whispered to one of the ushers, Harry Kestenbaum, "Do me a favor, will you? There's a blue handkerchief with my first initial on it in my coat, and it's always been a good-luck token for me."

"You're kidding! Who would know that you're superstitious?"

Don't waste time. "Here's what I hope you'll do for me, Harry: go out to the hall from the stage entrance and get me the handkerchief."

"Now?"

For God's sake! "Now, yes, and I wish you'd get it to me as soon as possible."

"Okay, sure."

"And one more favor, fella. Please come back into the hall by the front door."

He would probably have needed to invent some explanation for that, too, but Harry nodded and said, "Another superstition, huh? Okay."

And hurry.

He took a step forward to cover Harry's departure in case anybody out front noticed, but all eyes were on Freya. She had walked slowly up to the dais, given a tentative smile which he fully returned, and poised herself under the canopy. Walking on papery legs, he joined her.

"Blessed be they who come in the name of the Lord," Rabbi Langsam began formally. "We bless you from the house of the Lord."

Lou glanced back of him at the front door as often as he could, not surprised to hear somebody in the audience chuckling at what must have seemed like a sign of wedding nerves. Additional glances could be taken somehow through the benediction, through the sharing of dark wine from the same glass, through the rabbi's sonorous words about the duties and pleasures of the married state.

A flurry of comment had broken out among the audience as a result of what must have seemed like a tic. Very likely the sympathetic young rabbi would whisper a polite warning at any second.

It was Uncle Boomie who came to the rescue, the best man holding out the wedding ring on schedule, making it possible for Lou to turn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to one side and glance to his left without moving his head. He was able to do it again after he turned to the other side, putting the ring gently on the third finger of Freya's left hand.

"You are hereby betrothed to me by this ring in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel."

Again he sipped ceremoniously from the wine, passed it to Freya, and while waiting for her to return the glass, eyed the door yet again.

He was rewarded this time. Harry walked in. Norman White, seated among the audience, must have heard fresh noises from the hallway. He whirled around toward a possible late arrival, right hand darting to the gun in its holster.

If Sid had just come in, he'd have been shot. How could Lou be sure even now that Sid wasn't walking unobtrusively behind the usher?

He broke the glass first, concluding the ceremony. Then he ran to the lip of the dais, jumped down, and went on the attack.

And still Sid made no appearance. The man who called himself White had been restrained by suddenly sweaty ushers. Police had come and impassively heard him admit he was a stranger to Freya White and had carried on the impersonation after her life story was checked by others in the employ of his bosses. He had been taken away. Word had been passed admiringly among the quieted guests that the reception was going to take place as scheduled. And still Sid had made no appearance.

Groom and bride left the synagogue, together as they would be from now on even if any grim consequences erupted as a result of what Lou had just done. He was satisfied, one hand touching her arm delightedly as they walked. In the parking lot, no more than a hundred feet off, though, he stopped cold, unaware of Freya's inquiring look or an attendant's expression of fear for his well-being.

Seated behind the wheel of a fire-red Honda Civic and watching intently was the one recently bearded man Lou would have known anywhere. He gasped, started to smile, took large steps in that direction, and incredulously saw the other holding up one hand to keep him in place, to freeze him.

Only when he saw that gesture and recollected what had taken place did he understand his brother's apparently callous behavior. Sid had certainly come back, had damned all risks to attend this special wedding. But he had recognized "White" before going inside,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and was behaving now as if he felt it was possible that someone in the same line of work had accompanied that hit man. He certainly didn't trust the local police.

So he had chosen to wait, easing the risk of his life, for one sight of brother and bride. Fear had tempered heroism, fear had tamed the Wild Man.

And now he smiled slightly, made a weak circle of thumb and forefinger to show he approved what he was seeing. With his lips wide apart, he made it easier to identify the jaunty message, *Have a good one.*

One last sad act of bravado.

Then he turned his car around, having positioned himself close to the exit, and drove down West End Avenue to return eventually to his necessary hiding place, the particular burrow where he had been sentenced to spend the rest of his life.

Lou felt the presence of Freya's hand and certainly welcomed it, compensating if anything could for the loss of the brother whose eyes he would never meet again, whose hand he'd never clasp, who knew everything about his past, who carried with him Lou's image in the mirror.

DETECTIVERSE

STOP, THIEF (ROBBER, CROOK)!

by EMILY NEWLAND

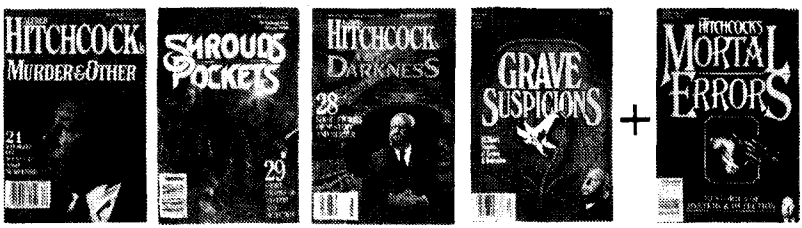
My sweetheart loved moolah (the long green, the dough);
He eagerly pilfered (he burgled, he stole)
Till the heat (the coppers, the boys in blue)
Stole *him* away from *me* (alas, alack, boo hoo)!

© 1992 by Emily Newland.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S 36th ANNIVERSARY SALE!

FREE BOOK!



Celebrate our anniversary with savings! For only **$9.95** plus $3.00 postage and handling, we will send you an assortment of **4** Alfred Hitchcock classic anthologies. **PLUS,** receive a fifth book **FREE!**

Please send your check or money order for $12.95 to:

HITCHCOCK ANNIVERSARY ANTHOLOGY SALE
P.O. BOX 40
VERNON, N.J. 07462

MGDQ-O

Please be sure to include your name and address.

While we cannot accomodate requests for specific anthologies, we guarantee that you will be delighted with your surprise assortment.

Available only in the US and Canada. Canadian orders please add $4.00. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Herbert Resnicow came to fiction writing late in life; his first book, the Edgar-award nominated The Gold Solution, *was published when he was sixty-two. But he has turned out to be prolific indeed, producing an average of five novels per year, including a sports mystery series whose first entry,* Murder at the Superbowl, *was said by* Time *magazine to be "far the best" of the sports-based mysteries of 1986. This is Mr. Resnicow's first publication in* EQMM, *and an auspicious beginning . . .*

DOG ACT

by HERBERT RESNICOW

You wanna hear a great joke?

This guy and his dog come into a booking agent's office. "Have I got an act for you," he says.

"I got plenty a acts," the agent says. "Too many."

"This one's different," the guy insists. "A talking dog."

"Ventriloquists I got coming outa my ears."

"No ventriloquism," the guy says. "You can watch my Adam's apple."

"So you do it without moving your Adam's apple, but I still don't need ventriloquists."

"Just listen, willya? As long as I'm here?"

"Okay," the agent says. "You got one minute."

The guy turns to the dog and asks, "What's on top of a house?"

"R-r-r-r-roof," the dog growls.

"And what's the opposite of smooth?"

"R-r-r-r-rough."

"Who's the greatest ballplayer of all time?"

"R-r-r-r-Ruth."

"Out!" yells the agent. "Get out, you phonies, and never come back."

The man and the dog turn around and start walking out, very depressed. At the door, the dog stops, turns to the man, and asks apologetically, "DiMaggio?"

© *1992 by Herbert Resnicow.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Great joke, right? First time I heard it, it laid me in the aisles. You too, right? But would you 've laughed the second time you heard it? A little, maybe? Okay, how about the third time? The sixth time? Believe me, by the tenth time you would stop even a customer from telling it to you.

That's normal. You know why? Because you heard it before? Wrong. Otherwise, tell me why, when Streisand announces she's going to sing a song you heard ninety-nine times before, you applaud before she even opens her mouth. And after you hear it for the hundredth time? You applaud even louder. Why? You love the song? Sure, but you loved the joke too. Okay, I'll give you another for-instance. How many times have you heard Abbott and Costello do "Who's on First"? Ten? Fifteen? Twenty? I'm in the profession and I've heard them do it at least fifty times. Hell, I've done it *myself* maybe a *thousand* times—*everybody* steals in this business—and it still kills me. On stage, I can hardly keep from breaking up, and I'm a pro. And Len, my straight man—don't forget, I can't watch myself mug and he can—I don't see how he keeps a straight face. I can make the strain of not laughing look like I'm blowing my top, but Len—if he don't take everything absolutely serious, the whole routine drops dead.

See, that's the answer. It ain't just the words or the music, it's what you do with it. Like taking the Talking Dog gag and making a routine of it. When Len and I do it, he's sitting behind a big desk stage left, lighting a big cigar. I bust in—not just walk in, I *bust* in. I'm so starving for a booking that I can't control myself. As soon as I realize what I did, I'm scared that maybe I blew my last chance to get a gig by the way I showed how desperate I am. The agent fakes looking busy. He don't raise his eyes from the desk for a full minute, while I'm doing a slow burn. I'm wearing schlumpy clothes—not my regular drop pants; just an oversize wrinkled old suit—and a wild grey wig. My mad scientist costume. Len's wearing a derby. When he looks up, he blows cigar smoke in my face. I'm so anxious to get a gig, I don't even wave it away. I put my hands on his desk and he gives me a *look*. Immediately I take my hands off. Stand at attention. You get the idea? We're not telling a joke; we're acting in a play. *Acting*. A real drama. With a terrific kicker at the end. When Trixie—she's the cutest little sort-of-terrier you ever saw, and the smartest dog I ever worked with—when she looks up at me like she's afraid her wrong answer cost us the job and says, in that sweet, sad voice, "DiMaggio?" and—*BANG!*—blackout—well, I'm telling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you, the audience goes wild. Absolutely crazy. We use it for the end of the first act of the show and we get two, three curtain calls, guaranteed. Then, as a kicker, I send Trixie out all by herself, to take the star bow. The audience goes wild again. And, believe me, we could do that routine twice a night and they'd never get tired of it. Because it's a real show, a real piece of life. Sad and funny at the same time. Like how many times have you seen a great movie, or heard a song you loved, or just looked at your grandchildren for the thousandth time? Some things you can't ever get enough of.

Len and me—we're not on any circuit now. We just give shows in the old folks' homes and the veterans' hospitals to keep our hands in. For charity, we keep telling ourselves, but actually, it's to keep from going crazy. And to get the applause; that's another thing you can't get enough of either.

Trixie don't talk, of course. She's a *dog,* for Pete's sake. I do the ventriloquism. You don't have to look hard to see my lips move—I'm not a real ventriloquist—but with me facing upstage, and everybody focused on Trixie, it's good enough. And she plays her part perfect. I touch my left eye, she looks at me. How I move my upstage hand, that's how she opens and closes her mouth. I snap my fingers, she jumps into my baggy pants. Always gets a laugh. And when I drop my pants and Trixie steps out, another boff. Trixie and Len and me, we're old pros. Too old. Dying of boredom. Playing gin all day long. That's when it all came to me. During a game of gin.

"Len," I said, squaring the cards and putting them away, "I got this terrific idea."

"What're you doing, Arnie?" he complains. "You're fifty points down and you're quitting? You stop now and you still owe me fifty cents." With Len it ain't the money, it's the principle. It's his ambition to get me to owe him a dollar. Hah! He should live so long. We *both* should live so long.

"Why are we playing gin?" I asked. You got to be very careful how you talk to a straight man. Straight is the hardest job in comedy and his timing's got to be absolutely perfect, so when you talk to him, it's got to be right on the button. Exact.

"Because me and Jean, and you and Hallie, we got enough put away so we don't have to work anymore, but we don't have enough to join a fancy country club. Besides, I hate golf."

"If you won the lottery, would you join a country club?"

"You kidding?" He gave me a disgusted look. "Who would I talk to there? And what would I say? We're the last of a dying breed,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Arnie. Even at the Friars . . . There ain't no real comedians left today; all they got is stand-up comics. With mikes. Can't even project. Telling one-liners they bought off college kids. You ever laugh at one of them?"

"Exactly my point, Len. There's no real comedians left today. We're it. One of a kind." I let him think for a second, that's enough for Len; he's very quick on the uptake. Plenty times when we were working and something went wrong, you think we stopped? Hell, no, a pro never stops; he adjusts. Sometimes it comes out even funnier than before.

"You want to go back to work? Is that it?"

"Don't you?"

"Where? There ain't a burlesque house left in the country."

"We make our own. Ann Corio did it with *This Was Burlesque.* Toured for years."

"That was over twenty years ago. Times are different now. Make our own burlesque house? Forget it." He put out his left hand and began counting fingers. "First, we don't have enough dough to even get started. You know what a union orchestra gets today? What a theater rents for? Eight dancers? A singer? Second, where do we get the girls? Doing a striptease is not the same as just taking off your clothes; it's an art. Today there's nobody who would come even close to Honey Deare and Jasmine Lafleur. Close, did I say? Hell, not fit to even hold their G-strings." He was talking about Hallie and Jean, big headliners in their day. In our day. They could get more applause teasing down to *twice* as much on as some models wear in TV ads today, where little kids could see them. "Third, nobody's going to pay to see girls in pasties and G-strings when you could go to any beach and . . . Hell, there are bars not too far from here where the *waitresses* are almost completely naked."

I waited until he was finished; Len don't like to be interrupted. "Exactly right, Len. But what they don't have is comedians. Real comedians. How many routines you know?"

Len pushed his lower lip out and thought for a second. "Couple of hundred. Maybe three." He saw what I was getting at. "You want to do burlesque without the girls? Impossible. And we need scenery."

"Half the routines can be done in front of a drop. *Fleagle Street. Pickle Persuader. Who's On First.* A lot more can be done with stuff any theater's got in the basement. Like *Here Comes de Judge, Pay the Man the Two Dollars, Dr. Kronkite.* You telling me we can't put a show together?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A lot of the routines need a talking woman. Maybe two. Some of the best ones—like *The Gazeeka Box*—need a lot of girls. Where we gonna find girls to fit in? Two months of rehearsals before they even learn the basics. And they'd be *actresses*, wouldn't know what to do unless somebody wrote the lines. Couldn't ad lib. Would you trust an actress to get the feel of the audience, to work in with our timing? Burlesque is different from the legit stage."

"We got two of the best right here on this porch. Hallie and Jean."

He turned to look at our wives, knitting and talking wife stuff. "Yeah, they were the best. But Hallie's put on a little weight and Jean's lost a little."

"They're not going to strip, for Pete's sake; they're going to be in the acts. A little makeup, magenta gels, they'll do fine. All we need is a couple of young girls to fill in where we need them. Walk-ons. Non-talking parts."

"Where's the audience? Who's going to pay? How many of us *alte kockers* are there left who still remember?"

"That's the whole point. *Nobody's* left. We got a whole virgin audience. We'll give them *real* burlesque. I looked it up in the dictionary today. Satire. Parody. Take-offs. Like the old Greeks. Fifteen routines an act. Two acts. Thirty short, funny plays a performance. Play*lets*, if you want to be technical. Look at how big the audience was for *Laugh In*. For *Benny Hill*. We'll knock 'em dead."

"You still didn't answer about renting the theater."

"We don't rent; we sell ourselves as an act. The four of us and the two new girls. Six. And Trixie. Seven. Start in the Borscht Belt. The Catskills. We do good there, we go to Atlantic City, Las Vegas, *Hollywood*, even. We can give two shows a night, each completely different. You know what that means in money? Putting on two complete different shows with only six people?"

"And a dog."

"Trixie don't eat much. And she's a pro."

We didn't get any of the big hotels the first time out; they were all extra careful, wanted to see how we did before they booked us. I don't blame them; they're all run by big corporations now and they can't take chances. They'd rather pay big money for well-established draws. If the big name bombs, no one can criticize the manager. But if we—*The Len and Arnie Show*—bomb at a big holiday weekend, the hotel's booker could be looking for a new job.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The six of us—we'd gotten two nice girls: Elaine Gorton and Isabel Bandera; not much experience, but smart, pretty, and hard-working—had come up to the Restawee Mountain Lodge Hotel in our new van, ready to put on a show that night. It wasn't one of the real big places, and the fee was also not very big, but when you're breaking in you got to pay your dues. The theater manager, Ralph Millry, showed us to our rooms—the worst rooms in the place, naturally—and introduced me to the bandleader. Five-piece band only, but at least I'd have a drum roll and a cymbal clash for the blackouts.

It was Millry I was worried about. I'd met that type before. Soft and slimy looking, with slick black hair and a pale face. Professional, sure, he'd give us a good intro and the backstage work would be okay; no way was he going to screw up his living. It was the girls. Some theater managers think the performers are part of their perks. Well, not with my troupe. What you do outside, I told the two girls, that's your business. Inside the theater, you're working and you act professional. If anybody gives you a hard time, tell me. I'm not big and I'm not tough, but nobody screws around with my act.

The four of us went upstairs to rest after the trip—we're not as young as we used to be—while Elaine and Isabel decided to catch a little sun around the pool. Maybe show off their figures and meet some nice boys too? Why not? They're young. I told everybody to meet in the social hall at four to walk through a couple of the routines, get the feel of the stage, hang up our costumes and wigs, place our props, set the lighting and curtain cues, the usual.

Four o'clock and Isabel wasn't there. This wasn't how she impressed me the two weeks that we'd worked together. Isabel was a serious type; no drink, no dope. Elaine said they'd met a couple of nice young men—Bernie, an accountant, and Harris, a teacher—and arranged to have dinner at their table before the show. I told Elaine to check around and sent Hallie with her. Both the boys were at the pool, and they swore they hadn't seen Isabel since a couple of hours ago.

Now I was really worried. We looked in all the obvious places, but no Isabel. Finally—and I knew in my heart it was too late—I had Elaine bring down the clothes Isabel had worn on the trip here and gave them to Trixie to sniff. She's no bloodhound, but even the worst dog can smell a thousand times better than the best person.

Trixie and I found Isabel in the storage room backstage. Beaten up and choked to death. Ugly. Her dress was ripped and her panties torn off. I told Hallie to call the local sheriff and have him come

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

here fast. Quietly. With Len and Trixie, I stood outside the storage-room door, to make sure nobody changed anything. Whatever evidence there was, I didn't want it messed up and, at my age, I wasn't about to fight a guy Ralph Millry's age all by myself. I knew he did it; it sure as hell wasn't one of those two nice young fellows. I mean, why would they? Not only is the ratio in places like this about three girls to one boy—so the guys have their pick—they already had dates with Isabel and Elaine, and just letting nature take its course was a lot easier than trying to rape Isabel in a storage room. It had to be that louse, Millry. Prove it? No, I couldn't prove a damn thing, but I've been around long enough so my instincts are right most of the time. Len agreed with me, and when he agrees with me, you can bet your boots I'm right.

Sheriff Dan Kramer was a nice, middle-aged man, average height, a little on the heavy side, glasses. No dope, but no genius either. He went into the storage room to look things over. When he came out, he looked like I felt. "I'll call the coroner," he said.

After he finished the call, I told him who we thought did it. He said—off the record—that he wouldn't be a bit surprised. I was surprised. "If you know it's him, why don't you do something about it?"

"I don't *know*," he said, "I *think*. I need evidence. If there are fingerprints . . . But there wouldn't be. He's too shrewd for that. Not smart, but when it comes to covering himself . . . Just that his reputation . . . I hear things. Rumors, complaints that've never been filed . . . He's not from around here—this is his first season—so the owners of the hotel had no way of knowing."

"You going to let him get away with it? Killing that nice innocent girl?"

He looked sad. "I might have to." I believed him. But if he was ready to let Millry get away with murder, I wasn't. I can take a lot when I have to, but this I wasn't going to stand for. Isabel Bandera was one of my girls, and us professionals got to stick together. If we don't, sure as hell nobody else will stick up for us.

"I didn't want to get involved," I said, acting like an embarrassed civilian, "but what would you say if I told you there was a witness?"

The sheriff's face lighted up. "For real? You should've said so right off."

"Well, the reason was . . . I couldn't just tell you, it's gotta be shown. Look, empty out the social hall and get everybody together."

"Millry too?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Especially him. Bring those two young fellows—what's their names?—that Elaine and Isabel had the date with. Bernie and Harris. Elaine will show you who they are. Act like you suspect them too, but believe me, it's gotta be Millry. Put them up on the stage, with lights, so it looks like you're setting up a lineup for identification. A couple of busboys too, so it looks real."

"Not you?"

"I'll be there, but I got other things to do. You just do what I tell you, ask the right questions—I'll write them down so you'll get them exactly right—and the witness will identify the killer."

A half hour later, the suspects, Millry in the middle, were standing on the stage, five feet apart, facing front, about ten feet back of the footlights. Behind them, up against the backdrop, I'd put a chair for me to sit on. The spots were set up so they were shining right in the suspects' faces; if you're not used to it, that can be very upsetting.

Kramer announced that Isabel had been murdered and he needed everybody's cooperation. They didn't have to cooperate, he said, but he suggested very strongly that they did. The suspects, Millry in particular, looked all shocked and upset, but how else should they have looked?

While the sheriff was talking, holding their attention, I came from behind the backdrop, very quietly, and sat in the chair behind them. Then Len entered from stage right and placed Trixie in front of the lineup, facing the suspects, but in such a way that she could see me clearly, looking just past Millry. With a little luck, Millry would think Trixie was looking right at him. Then Len joined the lineup on the end.

I touched my left eye. Trixie lifted her head and looked at me. I hoped that Millry, that sonofabitch, was sweating. The sheriff stood at the footlights, stage right. "This is Trixie, the famous talking dog," Kramer told the suspects. He then turned and looked right at Trixie. "Are you ready?" he asked.

I made the signs with my hand. "R-r-r-r-ready," Trixie said, opening her mouth in perfect timing. The suspects looked around at each other, sort of uneasy, not yet understanding.

Kramer kept his eyes focused on Trixie. "You were in the storage room when Isabel Bandera was murdered?" he asked.

"R-r-r-r-right," Trixie said. There was no way Millry could object; if he opened his mouth, that would be like a confession, practically.

"Who murdered Isabel?" Kramer asked Trixie.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"R-R-R-R-Ralph!" Trixie said. Ralph Millry dived at Trixie, hands out, ready to kill her, but I snapped my fingers and she scooted past him to jump into my lap.

"It's a lie!" Ralph screamed, and turned fast. "Don't listen; he's a *dog*." He made for me. Len tried to stop him, but Millry knocked him aside. Just as he got to me, I snapped my foot into his knee, sideways. He screamed, fell down, started crawling toward me, still trying to kill the only witness to the murder. When he came close enough, I smashed my other foot in his ugly face. For Isabel.

Sheriff Kramer had his gun out, covering Ralph Millry. The murderer, hands over his broken, bleeding face, was crying. "I didn't do it. It was self defense. She attacked me. She started it." Kramer put the cuffs on him.

Hallie came over, took Trixie from my arms, and kissed her. Why not, she deserved it, best animal actress in the Catskills. Elaine came over, kissed me too, crying. Len came over, dusted himself off. "Your timing wasn't too bad for a change, Arnie," he said. "One of these days you'll make a good second banana." He took my arm and lifted me from the chair. "Go upstairs and lay down." He understood how much the strain had drained me, that I wouldn't be up tonight unless I had a chance to relax. "We got two shows to do tonight. Jean and Hallie and I—we'll make sure everything's working right."

"A show tonight?" Elaine couldn't believe it. "*Two* shows?"

"The show must go on," Jean told her. "But tonight, Trixie takes all the bows."

DETECTIVERSE

MA GOOSE'S CRIB RHYMES

by LEE K. RUSSELL

#1040: unearned income

Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son Max
Robbed a bank in his stocking mask,
One sack take-home and one sack for tax,
Such an honest citizen, my son Max.

© *1992 by Lee K. Russell.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JOHN F. SUTER

"There is a theory in time travel, publicized widely by Isaac Asimov, that a person returning to the past and killing his own grandfather would eliminate all of his grandfather's descendants, including himself," says John Suter. From this seed came the following science-fiction crime story, one of many works inspired by Isaac Asimov, renowned author of science fiction and a contributor to EQMM. *Isaac Asimov died on April 6th; his loss will be deeply felt...*

ERASING FOOTPRINTS

by JOHN F. SUTER

A shadow fell across his work, just as Fred Newton put the finishing touch to the machine.

He looked up. In the doorway of the garage slouched an unwelcome visitor—his younger cousin, Rick. Dirty jeans and T-shirt, scuffed, unlaced sneakers, lank, overlong lifeless hair, shapeless, sallow features, perpetual sneer . . .

"Hi, Fred. Whatcha got there?"

"An experiment. A machine."

Newton observed that the younger man was studying it with interest. Probably calculating which parts he could hijack and sell for cash.

"What brings you here?" he asked abruptly.

"A loan."

"Forget it."

Rick's face assumed what he evidently hoped was a pleading look. "It's just till I make a connection. Next week I gotta see that hard-nosed jerk, Baxter—"

"Your parole officer."

© *1992 by John F. Suter.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yeah. Him. And if I can't turn up a job— Or show that some straight nine-to-fiver's backing me—"

"You get a black mark. Well, that's tough. No way are there any handouts here."

Rick stared at his cousin, who was only average in build, but no way soft. He knew by the set of Fred's jaw that there could be no argument.

"Well, thanks a *lot,*" he muttered. "Just get on with your toy and forget about your family."

"Time machine," snapped Newton involuntarily. "Forgetting you is what I do best."

Rick had been on the point of leaving, but he halted and inspected Newton's handiwork more closely.

"Time machine, huh? Looks like a mini-sub with wheels."

Fred was surprised. He had expected his cousin to sneer at the idea. Perhaps Rick respected him as a physicist?

He stopped working. Rick was the only member of the family who had inherited their grandfather's anti-social character. The only difference was that old Newton had kept his piracies within the law, whereas his younger grandson had chosen to flaunt them wherever he could.

Fred already had plans for Rick. Since he intended to make his run shortly, anyway, he could indulge in irony.

"It has to be sealed," he told his cousin. "Can't tell what environment it has to go through." He patted the rounded nose. "It's all finished. I'm going to make a run soon, and I could squeeze you in. Want to come along?"

"Backward or forward? How far?" Rick asked, some wariness in his tone.

"Back seventy years. To see our grandfather."

Rick's eyebrows went up. "Old Jim? Why?"

"It's as good a place to start as any. Just to see what the old rascal was really like."

Fred watched his cousin think it over. Finally, the loose upper lip lifted. "Oh, what the hell. Yeah. See what it's like."

Fred nodded approval. "Help me push it out on the lawn. I don't think this garage was there seventy years back."

Rick was positioning himself to push the machine. "No cars?"

Fred felt the wheels move as he shoved. "I think the car was kept in a carriage house. It was near this. Torn down when I was about four years old."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The machine was on the lawn. Fred signaled a stop, then walked forward and touched a stud. A door silently slid back and recessed into the gunmetal body.

"See if you can squeeze in behind my seat," he said to Rick. "I never considered passengers, but I left plenty of room to bring stuff back."

Rick looked inside, decided he would fit, and climbed in. Fred followed, settling himself in the operator's seat. He pushed a button, and the door slid closed silently.

He flipped a small switch, and a low hum commenced. A set of dials in front of him was illuminated.

He could tell that Rick was craning forward, studying the instrument display. No harm. His cousin could have no idea of what was going to happen to him.

Fred himself had a rather clear vision of both their futures. There would be no futures.

Known only to Fred was the fact that he had an inoperable brain tumor. He had no intention of telling his wife, Julia. If his plan worked, she would find herself long married to some old sweetheart. Fred and Rick would never have existed.

Fred's intention was to take his machine back in time to confront his scoundrelly grandfather. When he did this, he intended to shoot the old villain. This act would cause his father, Harry, and his uncle, Christopher, Harry's younger brother, not to have existed. He and Rick would vanish.

This would dispose of Rick. No loss. His own vanishing would solve his physical problem. Ceasing to be would be no long agony.

He turned a dial and engaged a lever.

The view from the inside of the machine began to resemble the scene inside an automatic car wash, and the hum took on the characteristics of infinite speed. Fred began to chant in a low tone:

> "And departing leave behind us
> Erased footprints on the sands of time."

"What you rappin', man?" Rick's voice rasped in his ear.

"Just an old poem. Nothing you'd care about."

No point in arousing Rick's suspicions.

The violence of the hum continued for a shorter time than Fred thought it would, and the chaotic view became less turbulent. The sound died gradually, and the view from the forward port cleared.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Had Fred wished, he could have snapped a razor-sharp picture. They seemed to be at rest on a sunny, well-tended lawn. Fred thought he could see at least two persons about two hundred feet away.

He reached over and turned off the switch. He then touched the button and the door slid open.

"I think we're here," he said to Rick. "Want to get out?"

"After you," his cousin said, a faint tremor sounding.

He unbuckled his safety harness and slid out of the door. He could hear Rick begin to follow him.

A loud voice hailed him from across the lawn.

"You, there! You with that—that *contraption*—whatever it is. Get off my lawn! You'll ruin my grass!"

Fred ignored the voice. When he was sure that Rick had left the machine, he reached inside and took a plastic grocery bag from under the seat. It contained the .38 he had bought.

Addressing Isaac Asimov across the miles and the years (Asimov had publicized this idea), he whispered, "Now, Isaac, let's see if you're right."

Striding across the lawn in an ice-cream suit, a straw boater on his head, was a stocky man in his early thirties. His face was reddened, but not from the sun.

"Did you hear me? I don't care if you're trying to sell me a new model of—whatever's putting that thing out! I already have a Lincoln, and I'm proud of it. Now get that out of my yard!"

Fred held up his left hand. "Mr. James Newton?"

"Yes, and I don't care what you're selling—"

"James Newton? The Czar of the Sweatshops? Old Jim? You're already aging. But that will stop."

Fred's grandfather halted ten feet away.

"What is this? Some political harassment? Some yellow journalism stunt? I have nothing to say."

"Famous last words," Fred remarked. He took the gun from the bag, lifted it, and shot his grandfather three times in the chest.

Fred watched as his ancestor collapsed, blood staining his white suit copiously. His body stretched full-length on the ground.

Fred wondered how many seconds he had left, himself. There must still be a spark in the mortally wounded man.

Rick had gasped and exclaimed, "Oh, no," when Fred had fired the gun. Fred looked over his shoulder to catch his last reaction.

There was nobody there.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rick must have crawled inside the machine, hoping to hide if the police came.

Fred turned to look at the man on the ground. Absently, he tossed the gun toward the body. He had no further use for it.

Then he heard someone running toward him. A young woman in her late twenties, white skirts midway between knee and ankle. She had short, light brown hair, set in stiff waves. Her mouth was open and contorted.

Remembering old pictures, Fred recognized his grandmother.

She flung herself on her husband's body. "Oh, Jim, Jim. Don't die. How shall I raise Harry without you!"

Fred raised his eyes and looked across the lawn. In the shade of a large sycamore stood a wicker baby carriage, the top up to protect its occupant.

Harry.

His father.

He now knew where Rick had gone. His father, Christopher, was younger than Harry.

Old Jim was dead.

The machine should have gone one year farther back in time.

And he could not bring himself to kill an innocent baby.

He turned to go back to the machine to return to his own time, wondering what Rick's elimination would have done.

He was about to go back into the machine when he heard running steps behind him. He looked back and saw his grandmother racing after him, blood-smeared and tear-drenched.

"He's dead! Jim's dead!" she shrieked. "You did this! You did this!"

She had picked up the gun. Now, she lifted it and fired three shots point-blank.

Fred felt three sledgehammers hit him, one in each side, the third in the center, in his abdomen.

He fell forward, his arms flung wide, landing completely inside the machine. His first spasm made him hit the button and close the door.

Subsequent spasms caused him to hit every control, his uncontrolled graspings to twist every dial. The machine took off wildly.

When it finally came to a stop, Fred had nearly bled his life away. His last effort lifted his arm feebly, and he hit the button.

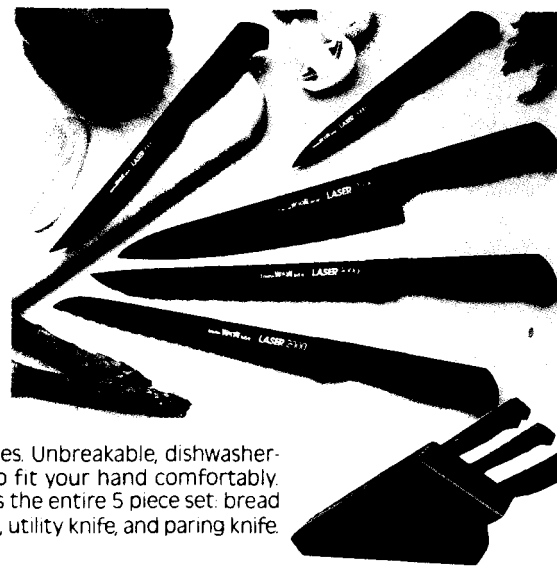
The door opened. A huge gust of marsh gas from rotting vegetation surged in and asphyxiated him.

Five minutes later, a dinosaur stepped on the machine and crushed it. ●

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

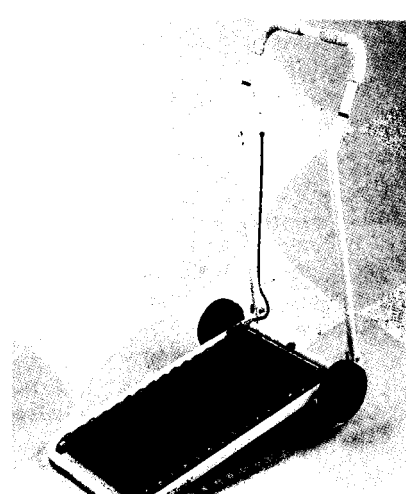
MAIL ★ ORDER ★ MALL

▼ CUTLERY: A CUT ABOVE THE REST



The secret behind Regent Scheffield's new Laser 2000's cutlery is the unique machined edge guaranteed to stay super sharp for 25 years — without sharpening! The result is a knife so sharp and durable that it comes with an unmatched guarantee. If a Laser 2000 knife ever dulls, chips, rusts, or breaks during the next 25 years, Regent Sheffield will replace it FREE! Plus, the Laser 2000's blades have a unique nonstick Xylan coating, so slicing even hard vegetables is a snap. And clean-up is a cinch because food doesn't stick to the blades. Unbreakable, dishwasher-safe handles are contoured to fit your hand comfortably. A lovely sleek wood block holds the entire 5 piece set: bread knife, carving knife, cook's knife, utility knife, and paring knife. **$129.98** ($7.00) #A1933.

▼ FOLDAWAY EXERTRACK™



Staying in shape is vital for our health and well being with today's lifestyle. Getting to the gym may not always be easy in our busy lives. We have just the answer for all you people on the go or just for the ones who enjoy to get fit at home. That's why the Foldaway Exertrack is the perfect way to exercise. This personal treadmill has a speedometer/odometer to monitor speed and progress. It measures 38"x21"x3" and features a safe rubber track and an adjustable handlebar that faces forward or backward for running and walking comfort. No electrical connections or motors needed. Exercise has never been simpler. Order one today and get on the right track with the Exertrack. Folds away for easy storage, lightweight and compact. At a great price! **$131.98** ($15.00) #A1977.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

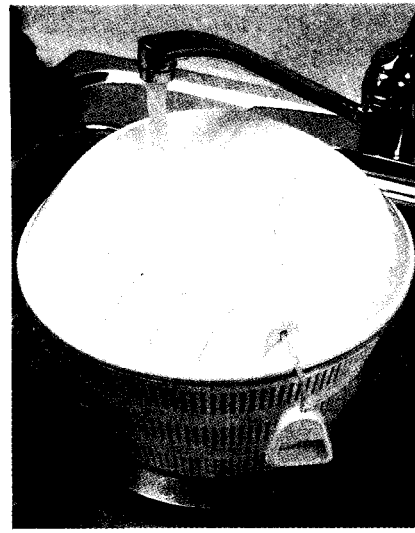
EVERYTHING BAG

People on the go always have so much to carry around. The Everything Bag makes it a snap. This oversized shoulder bag is constructed of tough, water-resistant canvas material and features nine roomy pockets. Plus, an unusual zipper design enables the bag to expand to double its normal width—to a full eight inches. Adjustable 2" wide straps provides a real comfort feature. In 3 great colors. **$24.98** ($4.00) #A1955-Blue, #A1956-Khaki, #A1957-Gray.

FOOD FOR WOOD

Most of the convenience waxes you buy actually dry out wood instead of nourishing it. What's the alternative? Our choice is Williamsville Wax. It is made of beeswax and lemon oil, heat-blended with other natural oils. It can be used on any type of wood, any type of finish, on paneling or kitchen cabinets as well as fine furniture. Williamsville Wax is super for restoring neglected or mistreated wood. Two 8-oz. bottles cost **$13.98** ($3.25) #A14312.

SPIN WASH, SPIN DRY



The Jet Spin Washer/Dryer for salad greens and vegetables, does a better job with less effort than any other method of preparation. As the stream of water hits the spinning inner basket, it bursts into spray, giving the contents a good drenching before being carried off by centrifugal action. Flywheel action keeps basket spinning with only a few gentle tugs. Spray wash coaxes dirt and grit from innermost lettuce wrinkles. Turn off the faucet and with a few more tugs the remaining water spins away, leaving you with crisp clean salad greens, so dry they are positively perky. Also works for fruits and vegetables. The Jet Salad Washer/Dryer is self-draining, splashfree. **$19.98** ($4.50) #A1520.

TO ORDER: Send check with item number for total amounts, plus shipping & handling shown in ( ) payable to **MAIL ORDER MALL**, Dept. 082 EL, P.O. Box 3006, Lakewood, N.J. 08701, or call TOLL FREE **1-800-722-9999**. NJ residents add 6% sales tax. We honor MasterCard/Visa. Sorry, no Canadian, foreign, or C.O.D. orders. Satisfaction Guaranteed. 30 day money back guarantee for exchange or refund. Allow 30 days for delivery.

Magalog Marketing Group Inc. © 1990
1905 Swarthmore Ave., Lakewood, N.J. 08701

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Author of eight previous stories for EQMM, *Suzanne Jones lives in Lyons, Colorado and devotes her time to writing. We take a special pleasure in welcoming her back to our pages, since she got her start in* EQMM's *Department of Firsts. . . .*

BIRDS, BY SNOW

by SUZANNE JONES

B.D. was pretty sure he was a loser, although he had denied it often enough in his short life.

"Oh, he's a loser," one of the other children would say with contempt. "Leave him alone."

"I am not!" he would shriek to the point of hysteria until some harried teacher or another would appear to calm him.

"I am not," he would sob, but he knew the facts were against him. He knew loss, that was certain. But knowing loss and what it was, and being a loser were, he hoped, not the same. Just as understanding and being able to stand what was understood were different.

He did know that what a thing was could be best defined by its absence, although he would not have expressed it that way. Expression was not easy for B.D. But B.D. knew "missing," he understood "absence" and "loss."

"Define 'bird.' What is a bird? Show us."

He would point to an empty, snowy field.

His teachers might sigh, but to B.D., absence and loss defined the heart of the thing that was missing.

He had lost his parents somehow, and the comforts of home, and recently had come to live in a large old brown house which belonged to his Aunt Clem, who fed and clothed him and received a check every month from the State to do so.

The State also provided a special school for B.D. which collected him five days a week during the school year in a fine yellow bus.

B.D. loved the bus if not the other students he rode with in the bus, and especially he loved the bus driver, whose name was Mr. Anderson and who had a wonderful sandy mustache and a leathery

© 1992 by Suzanne Jones.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neck, the back of which was crisscrossed with interesting lines. B.D. admired Mr. Anderson's ease of command very much. He did not like the teachers so much since they demanded much of him in their efforts to make him self-reliant and usually made him very tired.

In the summer the State was not so particular in its efforts to exhaust B.D.'s abilities and stretch his capabilities, so it freed him for long summer days and deep, powdery soft nights, during which he missed the bus and Mr. Anderson and sometimes some of the other children, at least at the beginning of the summer.

It was during one of those first days of summer that Aunt Clem had found him in the back yard industriously pulling the legs off grasshoppers.

Her reaction was swift and punishing.

The blow, which his shoulder mostly absorbed and which just glanced off his cheek, was enough to start his tears of fright and bewilderment.

"I didn't think you could see me," he protested, since he had gone behind the shed, suspecting that his turning the leggy creatures into worms might not meet with her approval.

Aunt Clem drew herself up. "These are God's creatures you are torturing to death. He is the One you should worry about seeing you, not me."

B.D. thought privately that there were a great many grasshoppers in the field behind the house, and God could spare a few for his purposes, but his aunt he knew from experience would not modify a position once taken, and so he put aside for the moment his interest in transmuting insects. To remove himself from his aunt's critical eye, he mumbled something about playing down the road a ways and trudged off toward the airport.

The small rural airport he had discovered somewhat earlier in the year on a weekend. He had been drawn by the sounds at first—the occasional buzzing which disturbed the Saturday morning calm—and he had been taken by the flashes of sun catching on the wings of the small planes as they took the air.

After some trial and error he discovered that if he kept the high wire fence on his left, it would take him all the way around the end of the south runway and to the parking lot outside the offices, hangars, and cafe which served the pilots, crew, and the general public.

There he had found his summer home away from home and his aunt's criticism. He was cheerful and careful not to get too much in the way, which was not difficult since it was not a very busy airport,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

used mainly by cropdusters and weekend recreational fliers.

The airport manager, after a short, stern conversation concerning the dangers of venturing onto the runways or bothering the pilots, left B.D. alone to wander down the lines of aircraft which seemed to him to be resting, waiting for their masters to press them into the air. From the one large, six-passenger plane down to the one-man acrobat, B.D. loved them all, loved their sleek, smooth skins and oily engines, the glass and metal mostly too hot to touch. B.D. seldom touched anyway. His short life had been crowded with admonitions not to touch.

It was there at the tie-down line that B.D. met Hedl and fell in love.

Hedl had a ginger mustache not unlike that of Mr. Anderson the bus driver, and he slung his feet out as he walked, like a little pony prancing. He owned the maroon and white Mooney which was tethered at the very end of the tie-down line.

The acrobatic little plane was B.D.'s favorite. It looked very much like a toy compared to the larger, more practical aircraft. The Mooney was a single-seater, a plane valued for its performance only.

"There are old pilots and bold pilots," Hedl was overfond of saying loudly for B.D.'s edification and anyone else within earshot, "but no old, bold pilots."

The old pilots and bold pilots to a man would snicker or grimace, depending on the category into which each fell, and turn away.

Then Hedl would go over the little Mooney inch by careful inch before unclamping the fireless pipe from between his teeth, tapping its ashless bowl smartly against the heel of his Wellingtons (which made him almost average height), and state loudly to no one in particular: "Well, then, Bozo, time to go!"

Each and every time he would then drag the Mooney off the line, usually with B.D.'s help.

Each and every time.

All of which was exactly what fascinated B.D. B.D. fell upon repetition like a puppy on a kind hand.

B.D. would trot beside the khaki-clad, leather-jacketed little figure that strutted to the wing of the Mooney every Saturday morning that had clear weather, marveling at his wisdom, guffawing when Hedl's own braying identified a joke, completely and blindly in love.

After a time, however, B.D.'s selfless adoration appeared to wear on Hedl. Perhaps the ease with which he had won a friendship which recognized no slight, acknowledged no wrong, had fatally

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

diminished its value. Or the weightiness of B.D.'s trust and commitment was too heavy a burden for Hedl's frail spirit to bear.

Whatever the reason, Hedl began to play little jokes on B.D.

Like sending him all the way down to the airport cafe for soft drinks, but not giving him enough change, so that B.D. would have to turn around with a hang-dog look and race through the heat all the way back to the end of the tie-down line where Hedl kept the Mooney, delivering the only drink he had enough funds to pay for and then having his agitated explanation largely ignored as Hedl single-mindedly continued his meticulous checkout of his aircraft.

Or when he began to teach B.D. scurrilous lyrics to flying songs and encouraged him to perform them in the cafe before audiences unsuitable for the material, including as they did sometimes the wives or girlfriends of the pilots, and the mother of the airport manager.

These women did not share Hedl's amusement. And their natural antipathy toward persons who were, well, not quite right—even though they were mostly ashamed of these feelings—caused them each separately to demand that something be done. The child belonged in a home in the summer, they insisted, not roaming about the airport.

The airport manager, who disliked Hedl more than his mother could have suspected, saw the problem as one of Hedl, rather than B.D., and largely ignored the complaints. Indeed, B.D. wasn't a problem for him—the child never showed any inclination to dash, or rather, lumber, into the path of any aircraft. (He wasn't after all suicidal, merely a little retarded.) He never pestered the pilots for rides like his own nephews, nor really made a nuisance of himself in any way—except where Hedl was concerned. It was Hedl who was the nuisance, but it was Hedl who was also a paying customer. Nonetheless, the airport manager did little except wish Hedl would grace the airport less with his presence.

Such was not the case.

Hedl was there as often as ever, but had turned moody and snappish. The airport manager's mother had thoughtfully redrawn her target and had spoken sharply about Hedl's ill usage of B.D. to Hedl's sister, with whom she played bridge. Miss Hedl might have said something to her brother, or it might have been B.D.'s persistent loyalty and constant affection which had simply worn him into complete irascibility.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So on the day Hedl shouted at B.D. to leave him alone, to get away from his plane, to go home, and called him the names associated with his lack of mental capacity and his soft, round body, B.D. listened. Usually he would have just attributed Hedl's harshness to a general crankiness on the part of his friend, but prompted by some reluctant counseling by the airport manager, B.D. actually listened to the words and began to recognize the sincerity of the anger and contempt in Hedl's voice.

The revelation washed over him corrosively, eating away at his resolve always to be Hedl's friend and to stand by him no matter what.

B.D. finally understood: somehow he had lost his best friend.

He slowly took his hands from the wing behind which he usually stood, ready to help Hedl move the Mooney onto the flight line, and tried to speak, but the sadness rushed at him and filled his throat and stung his eyes. And so he just stood his ground and let Hedl push the plane away and then heard the rasp and whirr of the propeller as it drew Hedl into the sky.

B.D. bent over, trying to stop the tears and the thudding of his heart, as though waiting for a blow.

Little by little, when no blow fell, he felt the warmth of the tarmac through the soles of his sneakers, and became aware of the other sounds, familiar sounds, comforting in their sameness: the pop and cough of other engines, the drone and whine of the Cessna landings.

He turned finally and began to walk the long walk to the fence and then to skirt the fence all around the south end of the airport toward the place he belonged to, but he did so slowly as he said goodbye.

Goodbye. Goodbye.

As he went, he bore blindly against the terrible knowledge that he was no longer Hedl's friend like a traveler against a high wind. He tried to keep his eyes on the ground. No longer could he joy in the courageous loops and dives and fearless spins as Hedl filled the sky with his acrobatics.

But he still could marvel. Unwillingly he found his eyes moving upward until he could just make out the little speck that was the Mooney, as Hedl tossed off one wing-over after another, gracefully drawing on the face of the sky the long, sweet curves of his freedom. And B.D. waited for the breathtaking drop that would culminate in a great loop, executed, it seemed, just before the earth could reach up to snatch him from the sky.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Except that this time, B.D. thought he saw a flutter in the long steep dive, a sun-catching shivering, and as he held his breath, waiting for the sudden rush upward (which was his own favorite of Hedl's many maneuvers), instead, impossibly, the Mooney just spun on down into the trees.

B.D. saw the bright orange flame before he heard the sound, like the crack of a great tree breaking its heart, and he felt all the air rush out of his lungs. When he could catch his breath, he began to run and run along the outside of the great high fence back to the airport.

By the time he got back to the airport, those who had remained behind because regulation said they had to shook their heads grimly and said there wouldn't be much to see at the crash site anyway since the Mooney had gone straight in.

Then again B.D. ran. Ran all the way home. Ran to tell Aunt Clem.

Of the awful thing that had happened to his friend Hedl.

Aunt Clem tried to comfort him, trying to place the tragedy in the same context as the loss of his parents, and sought to bring to him the familiar if spare solace of her religion. B.D. found as little comfort there as ever, but exhaustion eventually overtook emotion and his sobs finally ceased.

She made him go and wash his face and then left him alone.

He went into the back yard and scrunched down between the shed and the cedar which grew next to it, where he was sure neither Aunt Clem nor God could see him, and opened his fist and shivered with joy at the sight of the aluminum safety pin he had pulled from the aileron on the wing of the aircraft after Hedl had checked it and turned away. For once, B.D.'s fingers had not been clumsy but quick, and so now he had something to help him remember Hedl by.

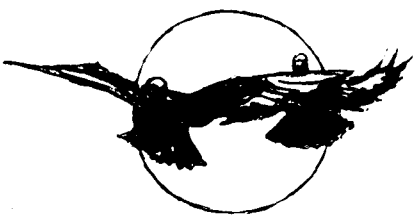
B.D. put the pin in the secret place under the rock at the root of the cedar where he kept the gearshift knob from Mr. Anderson's bus and the paper cup from the desk of the airport manager, thinking he would go to look at it all that fall and try to remember Hedl. But winter came and covered everything over with snow, so that he had mostly forgotten by spring.

B.D. didn't go to the airport anymore. The airport manager who was his friend was replaced by one who wasn't, so that after a while he was unwilling to endure the hardships involved in just getting there: making excuses to Aunt Clem, and the long hot, tiring walk all around the edge of the runway. One day he didn't go, and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

next it was easier not to go, until he never went again.

Sometimes in the summer he would stand at the edge of his aunt's back yard where it met the field full of dry grasses and grasshoppers and just look at the sky, so faraway blue and large and empty except for the high pale clouds and the occasional small aircraft.



ON OUR COVER

Winner of the 1990 Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Short Story, Lynne Barrett is a newcomer to the mystery field. Her award-winning story "Elvis Lives," published in the September, 1990 issue of *EQMM*, was her first foray into the genre. Like quite a few of her more literary stories, "Elvis Lives" examines a character at one of the shabby edges of show business—an impersonator of Elvis Presley, a man who lives and breathes the life of another.

The inspiration for these stories comes partly, Ms. Barrett says, from her own experience working as a singer, before she became associate professor of English at Florida International University. She now combines her teaching in the University's M.F.A. program in creative writing with editing a literary quarterly and writing stories for publications such as *Redbook*, *The Minnesota Review*, and *Quarterly West*. A collection of her short stories entitled *The Land of Go* was published by the Carnegie Mellon University Press in 1988. She plans to do more mystery writing in the future, to follow up on her stunning debut, and she will also be completing work funded by a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Lynne Barrett hails from Newark and Verona, New Jersey, and now resides in Miami. In addition to an Edgar award, 1991 brought her a baby son, James. We hope 1992 will prove as fruitful—especially for mystery fans.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE JURY BOX
by JON L. BREEN

One of the notable crime fiction developments of the past decade has been the emergence of the female private eye. Through the earlier history of the genre there were various attempts at such characters. Rex Stout's Dol Bonner appears as a secondary figure in some Nero Wolfe books but has only one case to herself, *The Hand in the Glove* (1937). A.A. Fair's (Erle Stanley Gardner's) Bertha Cool plays second fiddle to her brainy partner Donald Lam except in the wartime case *Cats Prowl at Night* (1943), which sees her in the principal detecting role while Lam is in uniform. Two heroines of fifties and sixties paperbacks, G.G. Fickling's Honey West (created by a husband-and-wife writing team) and Carter Brown's Mavis Seidlitz, are generally regarded as male fantasy figures rather than believable female operatives.

P.D. James introduced Cordelia Gray in *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972) but has returned to her only once. I thought Fran Huston's *The Rich Get it All* (1973) was quite a good effort to present Nichole Sweet as a female Lew Archer, but no further cases followed and the feminine pseudonym (per Allen J. Hubin's *Crime Fiction* bibliography) turned out to conceal a man, Ron S. Miller. This may have been the earliest instance outside of romantic suspense of a male mystery writer choosing a female byline. The revelation surprised me, but it's possible women readers saw through him all along.

Of the current crop of "real" female private eyes, Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone got to the post first, in 1977. Liza Cody's Anna Lee (1980) and Maxine O'Callaghan's Delilah West (1981) also preceded the two most famous women shamuses, Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone and Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski (both 1982). Another of the best-known names, Linda Barnes's Carlotta Carlyle, came along in 1986 in a short story and the following year in book form.

Below are considered the latest cases for Millhone, Warshawski, and Lee, along with a more recent addition to the ranks and an unusual variation.

**** Sue Grafton: *"I" is for Innocent*, Holt, $18.95. David Barney has already been acquitted of shooting his ex-wife Isabelle through a doorway peephole, but the victim's other ex-husband is trying to get at Barney another way by bringing a wrongful death suit in civil court. When an elderly private eye who was investigating the case for the plaintiff's lawyer dies, Santa Teresa, California, sleuth Kinsey Millhone is hired to retrace his steps and pick up the pieces. Grafton always writes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lively and amusing prose, full of quotable lines and comic set pieces, but her plots have been highly variable. This one is first-rate, as cunningly constructed and surprising a pure whodunit as I've read in quite a while. The denouement provides a fresh take on a standard mystery-novel situation.

*** Sara Paretsky: *Guardian Angel,* Delacorte, $20. V.I. Warshawski, like her creator, is a dog lover, and it's the unnecessary death of the beloved dogs of an otherwise uncongenial neighbor that propels the Chicago sleuth into her seventh book-length case, as usual heavily involved with well-hidden business malefaction. This series illustrates a truth about present-day private eye fiction, usually applied to the women operatives but applicable to many male series as well: in contrast to the lone-wolf style of characters like Spade and Marlowe, whose only continuing associations were essentially professional, the detective's personal relationships with a cast of continuing characters (in this case elderly neighbor Mr. Contreras, Dr. Lotty Herschel, and lawyer/ex-husband Richard Yarborough) carry much of the interest of the story. V.I. herself is a character of unusual depth and complexity, and her cases are always worth the reader's attention. The novel's only drawback is a common one in the current market: it would be a good deal better at about two thirds the length.

*** Liza Cody: *Backhand,* Doubleday/Perfect Crime, $18.50. Aside from her nationality, London private eye Anna Lee differs from her best-known contemporaries in at least two ways: she works for a large investigative firm, where selling home and business security systems accounts for a large part of her duties, and her cases are narrated in the third person. The search for the missing husband and daughter of a fashion designer takes Anna to a Florida resort—while American visits by British sleuths are often a bad idea, Anna's culture shock is interestingly handled and the American dialogue is reasonably convincing. Cody offers a thinner plot than Grafton or Paretsky, but her gift for style and characterization is comparable. The unresolved questions of the final chapter (about Anna's personal life, not the mystery) are well calculated to draw readers back for the next adventure.

*** Nancy Baker Jacobs: *A Slash of Scarlet,* Putnam, $19.95. The second case for Minnesota P.I. Devon MacDonald shows her not far from the top echelon. The search for a middle-aged Lothario who has preyed on single women sends her to Monterey, where a planned confrontation by the subject's victims takes a fatal turn. As with Warshawski, a troublesome ex-husband is among Devon's problems. The puzzle plot is neatly worked out, though I doubt many readers will be taken in by the shell-and-pea misdirection of the closing chapters. Jacobs includes a very contemporary reverse on a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

standard mystery situation: the one where the tough detective wants to check out of the hospital prematurely.

** Gilbert Morris: *Deadly Deception,* Fleming H. Revell, $8.99. Of this group of female private eyes, Danielle Ross is the only one written about by a man and the only born-again Christian to whom winning converts is more important than solving the case. The evangelical detective novel can be done successfully (see, for example, some of Gaylord Larson's books), but the preaching can't be allowed to over-balance the mystery as it does here. Working as a nanny for the grandchildren of an ailing organized crime patriarch while investigating a double murder in the family, Ross proves an unconvincing investigator. Her incredible naiveté is demonstrated when she has a look at the crime family's books and recommends an outside audit. Though the book is set in New Orleans, there is little sense of place, save an authorial tirade on what a loathsome event Mardi Gras is. Morris provides some good action scenes, but the whodunit resolution is disappointing and there are too many conversions for credibility. One of the converted makes a decision, apparently supported by our heroine, that is of extremely dubious morality.

*** Harry Kemelman: *The Day the Rabbi Resigned,* Fawcett Columbine, $20. Rabbi David Small is one of the great detectives of recent fiction, and if his tenth adventure doesn't rank with his best in terms of puzzle, it will be no less delightful to the series' fans. Some of the highlights are only tenuously related to the plot: an amusing description of the very casual Barnard's Crossing Symphonic Orchestra, of which Chief Lanigan's wife Amy is a member, and the inventive theological arguments of the Rabbi's atheist/agnostic cousin known as Simcha the Apicorus. (Rabbi Small is the rare fictional sleuth who has aged with the calendar: he was in his twenties when he came to Barnard's Crossing in *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late* (1964), and he's now in his fifties and contemplating a mid-life career change.)

** Max Allan Collins: *Dick Tracy Meets His Match,* Bantam, $4.99. The third of a projected four novels about the longtime comic-strip cop is set in 1949 and uses early television as its background. Dick is set to marry Tess Trueheart, whose role here is disquietingly like Faye Dunaway's in *Network,* on a program hosted by Ted Tellum, a folksy broadcaster clearly based on Arthur Godfrey. The main villain, a wrestler-turned-agent known as T.V. Wiggles, is a typical Tracy nemesis whose perniciousness is clear from the first, but Collins has some surprises in store at the end. There's plenty of fun here for fans of the strip or those interested in the dawn of TV, but it's tough to rate purely as a novel. A character like B.O. Plenty comes off too broad on the printed page, and the back-story fill-in sometimes stalls the action.

© 1992 by Jon L. Breen.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** short story by

WILLIAM BANKIER

Writers are often asked, "How do you go about finding ideas for stories?" The answers we hear generally include a wide range of experience. But in this case, our author can trace the genesis of his story to something specific, a line from a well-known poem by A. E. Housman, "Reveille."

CLAY LIES STILL

by WILLIAM BANKIER

The shop was called "Mugz" and it was on the wrong end of Melrose, near La Brea. When Ted Beldon entered through the open doorway, a hidden device went beep. Waiting for someone to respond to the signal, he looked at shelves of ceramic mugs and plates, all brightly painted with vines, wide-eyed faces, and animals.

"How can I help you?" A slender girl with straight dark hair drawn across one shoulder had come in from a back room. She was wiping her hands on a dusty apron.

"I saw your sign in the window." She was not a girl, she was a woman in her forties, probably. But slim and fit. "Help wanted? I'd like to apply."

Her eyes ran him up and down. Beldon believed an interview was over, one way or the other, in this first instant. She was curious. After nearly two months in Los Angeles, he had picked up no protective coloration. He still looked like upstate New York; the bored bank teller fleeing Algonquin Landing while there was still time.

"The job is in two parts," she said. "I can see you'd be okay for the shop." She offered a hand. "I'm Martina Carr." He said who he was. "I need help making cups and plates. Could you work with clay?"

"In nursery school, I majored in mud pies."

© 1992 by William Bankier.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Let me show you what's involved."

So Beldon was suddenly anchored again after weeks of drifting. One thing he had learned was that freedom comes with fear attached. He had been on edge since giving notice at the bank, working at keeping up his morale. "I'm thirty-three," he had told his sister as she fried sausages and he drank a beer from the bottle. "I have to make a move."

"You'll be back," she said. "I'm not even going to say good-bye."

His mother told him, "Take care of yourself. You're just like your father." No need to ask what that meant since the old man had fallen off the pier and drowned in the lake while fishing.

In Martina's back room, Beldon was charmed by the broad work table, the light, the space. Unpainted cups and plates filled several shelves. Martina cut a piece of clay from a slab using a piano wire with a wooden handle at either end. He was reminded of the device used to strangle Luca Brasi in *The Godfather*.

She pressed clay flat with a rolling pin. She cut a circle with what she called a needle-tool, peeling away the excess from the circumference. "We're making a saucer," she explained. "Do what I'm doing. Get your hands dirty."

An hour later, there were two grey saucers in front of the high stool where Beldon was perched. The second was better than the first.

"You can do this," she said. "When can you start?"

Beldon walked back to his upstairs room in the old house on Orange Grove. Purple bougainvillea brushed his head as he ducked in through the front doorway and took the steps two at a time. Inside the tiny room, he was so excited he shadowboxed on the worn carpet, tossing jabs at the pine table, at the floor lamp, at the tall bureau with the framed snapshot of his mother and sister beside the hollyhocks near the kitchen door. Then he fell backwards onto the bed, tingling.

It was happening! Weeks of wandering the streets, eating late in restaurants, drinking alone, had not been wasted. He had been learning the lay of the land. Hollywood was a disappointment. It took about ten minutes to inspect the famous footprints outside the Chinese Theater. Then it was just streets full of drunks and junkies and some truly sick, weird people.

Beldon took pride in staying out of trouble. But he was running out of money. And his dream, that he would get to know famous people, had not come true.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now, suddenly, he was working for Martina Carr. They had talked for a long time, agreeing schedules and the seven-dollar-an-hour wage. She was the daughter of Jackson Carr, the movie director. Beldon recognized the name. Carr made a lot of B-movies in the forties and fifties and banked plenty of money. When he died ten years ago, he left Martina well fixed with a cottage on King's Road above Sunset Boulevard. Her mother was somewhere in Europe.

Beldon's new employer was quick to see the effect she was having on him and decided to orient him, tactfully, from the start. She said, "You'll be meeting my boyfriend, Skid Wilder. He's a character and a half. Used to be a stunt driver before he racked himself up."

So the relationship was squared away. They could be friends, nothing more. Beldon liked to know where he stood.

He slept. It was dark in the room when he awoke. No work tomorrow; he was due to come in at nine on the following day. Beldon got into his other jeans and pulled on the English rugby jersey he had brought with him from back East. Then he left the house and walked flat out along residential streets, making up his mind which bar he would visit first.

When the telephone rang, Beldon was alone in the shop. He picked up the workroom extension and said, "Mugz."

"Is Marty there?" A woman's voice.

"She's out right now. Can I take a message?"

"Who are you?" The rudeness was defused by a tone of childlike curiosity.

"I'm Ted. First day on the job."

"Okay, first-day Ted. I'm Sandy Feldenheimer. Tell your boss I'll be around in a few days to pick up the tiles." Before hanging up, she added, "Please and thank you for a Tootsie Roll."

The name rang a bell. The only Feldenheimer he knew of was the former Olympic swimmer, Larry Feldenheimer, now deceased, who had starred in a series of black-and-white movies as "Zardol, King of the Jungle." Beldon and his friends loved them. Zardol was always swimming to the rescue through crocodile-infested waters. Was it possible the woman was related to the star?

When Martina returned from her errands, she was not alone. Skid Wilder was with her. It was like shaking hands with a tree. Wilder was the size of an offensive tackle. He wore, in fact, a black and silver Raiders T-shirt. The high-domed head was bald on top. Massive forearms gleamed with golden hair.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beldon gave Martina the message and asked his question.

She said, "Oh sure. Sandy is Larry's widow. She's a lot younger. He left her a real nice piece of property in Coldwater Canyon."

"I must have seen every movie he made."

"Better you than me. My father directed a couple of them. He thought they were squat."

Wilder was taking in the conversation with half a grin on his face, the big head turning back and forth, pale eyes alert as if this was a new game he would have to learn to play. "Tell him about the ditzy daughter. Tell him about Ferris."

"Ferris Feldenheimer," Martina recited, "is nineteen years old, awesomely beautiful, and pure poison. Sandy has already paid twice to have her detoxed at a very expensive clinic."

"The kid snorts more cocaine than a Philly jazz band," Wilder said.

"While Larry was alive," Martina continued, "it was Ferris and him against Sandy. Dad spoiled her, Mom was the cop. Now all Ferris wants from Sandy is money. I've heard her. She'd like her mother to die so she can inherit."

The stunt driver had to go. Watching him out the door and past the window, Beldon got a look at the limp. He swung his left foot forward and the boot hit the pavement as if it were a rock on a rope. Martina said, "They did a lot of work rebuilding one whole side of him."

"Did he crash on a stunt?"

"No. Skid had a perfect record in the industry. Then he goes and totals his car on the freeway. He fell asleep and went over the side."

"Can he drive now?"

"Not and get paid." Martina went into the workroom, then she came out again and stood in the doorway. "Does he spook you?"

Beldon was afraid of Wilder but he was not ready to admit it. "I'll just be careful not to make any sudden moves."

"Skid thinks of me as his personal property. Any other man around, Skid keeps watching him. Some people get freaked."

"Thanks for the warning."

When the shop closed that evening at six, Martina borrowed Beldon to help her transport several cartons of mugs to the cottage on King's Road. She would be delivering them tomorrow morning, early, to a customer in the Valley.

The house was white stucco, wedged into the hillside, mostly concealed by willows and palms. When he was all done carrying, Beldon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stood on a concrete patio looking down onto the next level at a circular pool brimming with blue water. "Take a swim!" Martina yelled from an open window.

"I don't have a suit."

"We stock all sizes."

She showed him where to change. The bathing suit was extremely brief. He frowned at his reflection in a full-length mirror; pale body, sunburned forearms, face, and neck.

He was doing slow lengths when he made a turn and saw Skid Wilder standing poolside with a drink in his hand. The lopsided grin revolved as the big man chewed ice. Irrationally, Beldon was afraid Wilder would think he had nothing on. He climbed the chrome ladder, then had to tug the soaked bikini back up across his belly.

"Job has perks," the stuntman said.

"Water feels good."

"One of these days, I'll have to challenge you. When I'm sober."

Martina appeared with a tray of snacks. "That day may never come," she said.

Beldon ate an olive. He swallowed some beer. Wilder was sprawled now in a deckchair, looking nowhere but at him. A chilly breeze flickered down from the hills.

"I have to go," Beldon said.

"Don't run away," Martina said. "We're here for the evening."

He toweled himself off in the bathroom and got into his clothes. They were clammy from the carrying. He came out to say goodbye and Martina said, "Need a lift?"

"I can walk where I'm going."

"You shouldn't let this bastard drive you away."

Skid was watching him with profound amusement, as if Beldon with his anxiety, his confusion, his cowardice, had been hired to entertain him. "I have someplace I have to be," Beldon said.

"And here I thought we were going to get to know each other," Wilder said.

It was days later, in the shop. Skid Wilder cleared his throat and Beldon almost leaped onto a display of plates. He had not noticed the big man in the doorway. "Sorry about that," the stuntman said. He came inside. Large hands adjusted Beldon's position on the floor, like a displaced piece of furniture.

"Martina isn't here."

"I know. I came to see you."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What about?"

"Let me buy you a drink."

Through his panic, Beldon felt flattered. "I have to work."

Skid frowned at his watch. "It's five-thirty. The store closes at six." Then, after a pause, "I'm not your enemy."

They drove to Westwood in Wilder's shiny Buick, the stuntman taking the Sunset Boulevard curves with ease. "There's the driveway Bill Holden pulled into in the movie."

Beldon was intrigued. It sure looked like the driveway. His chauffeur cut down Hilgard and turned right on Le Conte. They drove past the UCLA Medical Center and parked outside Alice's Restaurant.

The place had a long, wide bar. They climbed onto padded stools with low backs. Wilder ordered bourbon and Beldon asked for a beer.

"One time," Wilder began, "I was working on the 'Hampton' series." He was referring to a long-running TV serial about a detective in a battered car. The stuntman told a story about missing a ramp and plowing into the bus he was supposed to vault at fifty miles an hour. The car was heavily braced and he was securely belted in. Even so, he had to live with two cracked ribs. But the smash was so spectacular, they used it in the episode. "I told the director I figured he hid that ramp on purpose."

The men ate at a table and went on drinking. Wilder got onto the subject of a pro football player, a charismatic giant who had been reduced within months by brain cancer to a big-eyed, hairless talk-show guest. Beldon had witnessed that interview. "I wonder if they've told him he's dying?"

"I think about dying all the time," the stuntman said. "Like any other event that's part of my life."

"Skid, you're morbid."

"No, it's cool. You're only afraid of the unknown. Death is as familiar to me as where I live." Wilder looked thoughtful. "I'll know it when I see it."

As darkness fell, they left Alice's, drove out of Westwood, and headed back to L.A. Wilder drove the straight stretch of Santa Monica Boulevard past the towers of Century City and the lawns of Beverly Hills. In West Hollywood, he parked outside a raucous bar open to the street. The clientele here was all male. Some of them tried to flirt with the giant newcomer.

Focusing on Beldon, Wilder drank doubles and became sour. His mood had gone off. He was bitter and resentful, reciting a litany of injustices. The freeway crash was lousy luck. He would never work

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again. It was humiliating being supported by Martina. Didn't Beldon realize that? Sure, she kept him for free in the house on King's Road. But she doled out the money. He hated being owned.

Beldon could only listen apprehensively.

It got worse. Wilder went to the bathroom and when he came back to the bar, he was wearing a secret smile. "Can I trust you?"

"Yes."

"The Feldenheimer woman, Sandy. She has more money than she knows what to do with. I been thinking of ripping her off."

"It's getting late, Skid."

"I know her schedule. She and Marty are always telling each other what they're doing."

Beldon did not want to hear this.

"I can get in. Sandy and Martina have keys to each other's homes so they can feed the cats. Some day when Sandy is away, I intend to drop around and help myself to some valuable stuff. On the way out, I can bust a door or a window to show forced entry."

"This is supposed to make you feel better about yourself?" Beldon pretended to scan a headline. "Famous stuntman jailed for burglary."

Wilder's mood was swinging back to joyful. "I have you figured for my partner. You can hold the velvet sack while I grab the jewels."

"Now I know you're kidding."

"It's important to get involved in life, Teddy. Like the poet said, 'Clay lies still, but blood's a rover.' "

Beldon had read A. E. Housman in school and was astonished to hear the lines from the drunken stuntman's lips. "I work with clay," he said.

Wilder winked. "I figured that would grab you."

That evening, while the men were drinking in Westwood, Martina's telephone rang about nine. "Can you talk?" It was Sandy Feldenheimer.

"Sure. What's up?"

"Do you know where Skid is tonight?"

"He's gone boozing with my new assistant. The guy just blew in from back East. He's terrified of Skid, it's embarrassing. Skid decided to try and cool him out."

"I'm scared stiff about Ferris."

"Ferris will take advantage of you as long as you let her."

"I want you to keep Skid away from her."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That was all over last year."

"He was here this afternoon. I came home and found him in the house. There was no sign of a car, he must have parked down the hill."

"Did Ferris let him in?"

"She wasn't here. He must have made a copy of the key I gave you."

"But why?"

"At first I thought he was coming on to me. Then I could tell he wasn't interested. So it has to be Ferris. Maybe he called her and she was supposed to meet him. I don't know what those two are up to."

"So then he left?"

"After going around and picking things up and putting them down. Like he was assessing their value. It was spooky."

On the following morning, Beldon walked to work. The marine layer was heavy, it would not burn off before noon. Under the grey overcast, he might have thought he was back in Algonquin Landing.

But not when he looked at the storefronts. They had names like "Wacko!" and "Cool." A hamburger restaurant was shaped like a hamburger, down to the sesame seeds on the round brown roof.

Stopping for a cappuccino at the Continental Bakery, he reflected that he was on a sharp hook. He could only hope that Skid was joking last night, or too drunk to remember. The robbery plan put Beldon in a tight spot. He now knew that Wilder intended to rob Sandy Feldenheimer. Surely he had to tell Martina so she could warn her friend.

But Martina would call in Skid and confront him. With Beldon in the room. Skid would deny everything. Either he never said it, or Beldon was unable to recognize a joke when he heard it. Beldon could not win. He would end up in Skid's bad books. He might get hurt.

Why should he risk himself? Zardol's widow was no friend of his. And what if Wilder did end up robbing the house? She was rich as they come. And the stuff must be insured. Beldon drained the foamy coffee dregs and walked on down the street to "Mugz."

A vintage white Thunderbird was moored at a meter. The girl behind the wheel watched him as he fished out the key entrusted to him by the owner so she could sleep late.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Where the hell is Martina!" Bracelets jangled as the girl brought a fist down on the steering wheel.

Beldon opened the door and stood in the doorway. The smell from inside was reassuringly familiar. Try as he would to be a rover, Ted Beldon seemed destined for stability. "Martina shows around eleven."

"Who are you?" The girl drew herself up from behind the wheel, taking a sitting position on top of the front seat. There were tanned knees and thighs and slender shoulders in a cut-off denim shirt. But it was the bone-hard, wasted face and the emerald eyes widely spaced that put Beldon in mind of a hungry animal. That and something else.

She looked familiar. Even the shoulder-length sun-bleached hair was the same. Here was the daughter of Zardol, King of the Jungle. "I'm Ted Beldon," he said. "And you must be Ferris."

She was accustomed to being recognized. She kicked off her sandals and braced bare feet against the steering wheel. "I need a couple of hundred dollars," she announced. "Marty is my mother's best friend. She often advances me money and Sandy pays her back."

Beldon said nothing.

"You can give me the money. Marty won't mind."

"I have no such authority." Beldon enjoyed being in a position to turn this kid down.

"Can you give me some cash yourself? I'll pay you back."

"I don't have it." He felt humiliated now, diminished in her eyes. "Why don't you get it from your mother?"

Ferris dropped back down behind the wheel. "Because she's a greedy, stingy, vicious, jealous bitch." She turned the key, the engine roared, and the car wheeled away down Melrose.

Martina called at ten-thirty. The buyer from Bullock's wanted to see her so she would not be in until mid-afternoon. Beldon told her about his encounter with Ferris. "You did the right thing," his employer said. "What time did you and Skid finish up last night?"

"I hit the sack around one o'clock."

"Skid didn't show up till four." A pause. "Did Ferris mention his name?"

"She only talked about you. And the money you'd give her if you were here."

"Have you noticed how people lie all the time?"

Beldon made up his mind. "Skid is getting ready to rob Sandy's house," he said. "He told me last night."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You believed him?"

"He sounded serious. You know him better than I do."

"Skid has a good thing going." Martina sounded confident. "I don't think he'd throw it all away by doing something ridiculous."

It was one o'clock. Beldon had eaten his peanut butter sandwich and swallowed his room-temperature Pepsi. He was feeling good because he had sold six mugs and a large platter to a couple from Fresno. But he was still disturbed about Skid Wilder's scheme. Skid had put him in the picture. If the robbery went down, would he qualify as an accessory before the fact? Martina had not taken his warning seriously. Should he think about calling the police? From what Beldon knew, the police were not able to take any action unless and until a crime actually took place.

Now here came Skid Wilder with a rangy, silver-haired woman who had to be Sandy Feldenheimer. Without introductions, she said, "Marty called me. Ferris was here?"

"At nine. She was waiting outside."

"You didn't give her any money?"

"No."

"Don't ever give her any. Not a red cent."

The woman's dictatorial manner disturbed Beldon. He saw Skid observing his reaction with a poker face. "I didn't have any to give her."

The swimmer's widow was not insensitive. "You two can enjoy this all you want. I happen to be the mother."

"If Martina shows up," Skid said, "tell her I'm buying this one lunch."

"Tell her he wants to mend fences," Sandy said. "Marty will understand. I'm accepting because I can use all the help I can get."

Skid straightened the collar of Beldon's shirt and flicked invisible lint from his shoulder. "Thought any more about our project?"

So much for hoping it was only the booze talking last night. Beldon considered warning the woman right now. He could hear himself saying, "Guess what, Skid is getting ready to steal you blind." And the stuntman laughing him off.

"We don't have a project," he said in response to Skid's query.

"Don't be too sure."

"I'm calling the detox center as soon as I get home," Sandy said. "I want them to come and get Ferris."

"She won't go," Skid warned.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She'll go or I'll get the police to come and drag her."

Martina was walking on air when she showed up at four. The department store had placed a large order. Beldon would be building cups and plates overtime. He told her about Sandy's fence-mending lunch with Skid, and her intention to sock Ferris back inside.

"The tragedy plays itself out." Martina was not focusing on her friend's problem. She was filled to the brim with her own success.

"I have to say this. Skid brought it up again. I think he really intends to rob that house."

"Ted, what am I supposed to do?"

"Talk to him. If he knows you know, maybe he'll forget about it."

"You'd like me to say you told me?" Her smile illuminated his fear of Wilder.

"All right, he scares me. I'd rather he didn't have a reason to be my enemy." Beldon had to retaliate. "You're the reason he wants to steal."

"I'm not his keeper. He's free to go anytime he wants." Martina shook her head to clear it. "I can't believe you're on my case. After a couple of weeks. Los Angeles sure works on people." She headed for the back room. "I want Sandy to pick up the rest of her tiles. We'll need the space."

While the boss was on the telephone, Beldon sold four more cups to a woman whose friend had bought some a week ago.

Martina came back looking peeved. "She doesn't answer the telephone."

"Taking Ferris to the clinic?"

"Whatever. I want you to load the rest of Sandy's tiles into the trunk of my car and deliver them to her house in the Canyon." She gave him a set of keys which included one for the car and one for the Feldenheimer front door. "I'll draw you a map," she said.

In this last hour before sundown, most cars had their lights on. The winding road taking him up into the hills provided an exciting ride. As the car climbed, the air became cooler. His heart was pounding when he saw, finally, the red shingled roof Martina had said would be his signal to wheel in and stop on a narrow gravel forecourt.

The white Thunderbird was tucked in snugly beside the mock-Tudor bungalow. There were no lights on inside the house. When he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

switched off and got out of the car, Beldon found himself substantially in the dark.

He unlocked the trunk. The tiles were individually wrapped in newspaper and stacked carefully in wicker baskets. They were heavy. One basket was enough to carry.

He took a moment to admire the web of city lights below. The air was cleaner here. The scent of pine put him in mind of Algonquin Landing. He was still calculating the time difference. Three hours later back East. His mother and sister would have watched the late news, eating bridge mix and drinking Mountain Dew. They would be checking the late movies in the guide now, deploring the colorization of *Key Largo*.

Beldon carried a basket of tiles to the broad oak door with its half-moon panel of stained glass. He could not see a bellpush. He knocked and waited. Then he used the key. The door swung open and he walked through into a shadowy interior, feeling his way, searching for a light switch on the wall. He inhaled an unfamiliar scent, something like damp rust.

His hand touched a switch. He flicked it and bright light poured from an overhead fixture. He was in a narrow vestibule leading into a lounge area. The place was in disarray. Cushions had been dragged from an upholstered sofa. A few books remained on shelves, the rest were scattered across the floor. The glass in a mirror above a desk was shattered.

Behind the desk, a swivel chair lay on its side. There was something else; Beldon could see silver hair, a bare shoulder. Breathing hard, he went that way, stood on the other side of the desk, looked down on the body of Sandy Feldenheimer. What he had smelled was fresh blood, lots of it, flooding from a wound in her naked back. She was wearing only a pastel silk robe. Clearly, the woman was dead.

It was time to dial 911. Beldon saw a telephone on a small table near the front door.

"Don't even think about it," Ferris Feldenheimer said.

She was watching him from a dark doorway at the other end of the room. He had not noticed her because she was sitting on the floor, leaning against the doorframe, an automatic pistol held in both hands and balanced across her knees. Her eyes were vacant, like those of a child allowed to stay up much too late.

"Don't you recognize me?" he said. "I'm delivering the rest of your mother's tiles."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No. You came in here and saw her with nothing on." Said in a dreary monotone. "You got excited, you tried to put your hands on her. She screamed. I ran in and yelled at you but you wouldn't let her loose. I tried to shoot you. You used her as a shield. Then," Ferris cocked the gun, "you came at me so I had to kill you."

Skid Wilder said from the doorway, "If that's what happened, why is the place all torn up?" He came into the room.

"Be careful," Beldon said.

"I came looking for my drinking buddy. Martina said you were on deliveries." Wilder surveyed the room. "Hey, what an opportunity to do what we talked about."

Ferris got to her feet. She was having trouble standing but the gun looked steady as a rock. "I'm not going back to that clinic. She was getting ready to call the police to take me in. We fought and she was winning. So I ran and got Dad's gun."

"Hand it over," the stuntman said.

"Keep back!"

"She means it, Skid!"

"You need help, girl." Wilder made a move in her direction. "Don't make things worse."

Ferris squeezed the trigger, three times, rapidly. The sudden noise shocked Beldon. He saw Wilder break step, then go to his knees. He extended one hand, reaching for the gun. Then he sank forward and lay face down.

Beldon knew he was going to die. The gun swung and pointed at him. The girl's finger squeezed again. The hammer clicked on an empty chamber. Again, click. Children with toy weapons. Beldon went to her and pinned her arms. She put up no resistance. He took hold of the gun. She let it go.

"All you had to do," Ferris moaned, "was give me some money. This is all your fault."

The ambulance drove away. The police, sealing the house, told Beldon he could go. But they would want to interview him further tomorrow. He drove out of the Canyon and took Sunset Boulevard most of the way back to the shop.

It was time to consider what he was going to do. How about getting out of Los Angeles, away from the crazies and the bad air? Skid would have rejected that idea out of hand. You don't go back, you go forward.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He found himself thinking about importing his mother and sister, plucking them out of the path of another approaching winter. They could sell the house in Algonquin Landing. His sister could find a job. The old lady might even buy a fancy track suit and make a nuisance of herself mornings in the mall.

Martina was in the workroom waiting for him. His telephone call had only scratched the surface. He told the whole story now.

"I'll never figure Skid Wilder out," she said when he was finished. "We had a good thing going. But he had to keep messing around with Sandy and that crazy kid. I never thought she'd kill him, though."

Beldon knew how Wilder would want to be remembered. "Skid did what he did because it was something to do. Not because he was a thief or he needed the money. Planning to rip off your friend's house was something to do. So was stepping in front of Ferris's gun. He explained it when we were drinking the other night." The Housman poem was vivid in Beldon's mind. He picked it up now and continued where Skid had left off. Martina listened, trying to comprehend.

> "Clay lies still but blood's a rover,
> Breath's a ware that will not keep,
> Up lad, when the journey's over,
> There'll be time enough for sleep."

"I suppose I'll be losing you now," Martina said. "I sent you up there and you nearly got killed."

"No, but maybe you can help me get a car." Beldon could feel Skid's influence speaking out. "This town is a dead end if you don't have a car."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

SCOTT MACKAY

"Mr. Coombes, we've just about run out of patience. If she refuses to cooperate, we'll go forward with the weapons charge, and I'll recommend a jail sentence to the trial judge. . . ."

THE GREY-MAILING OF LEONARD COOMBES

by SCOTT MACKAY

Leonard Coombes, a short man to begin with, and who, with an artificial leg, wasn't the fastest of walkers, forced himself to keep up with Detective Sergeant Peter Dennis, despite the chafing on his hip, as they walked down the corridor to the visitors' area of the Broadmoor East Detention Center. His long swooping bang of thinning brown hair—a relic from his post-Vietnam days—bounced into his eyes with each lopsided step, and he pushed it out of the way with his badly scarred hand, tucking it behind what was left of his right ear.

"Was her boyfriend there when this happened?" asked Leonard.

"Rob Sheehan?" Detective Dennis nodded. "Yes, he was. Slow down, Mr. Coombes. You're sweating."

"I'm all right. How much further?"

"Just down here," said the detective.

"This place is huge."

"Frankly, Mr. Coombes, I don't think the gun belongs to your daughter."

"Did the police find any drugs? I hope they nailed Rob for drugs. I'd like him out of my daughter's life, if you know what I mean. He's bad news."

© 1992 by Scott Mackay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Actually, we were looking for shoes."

"Shoes?"

"It's nothing you need concern yourself with, Mr. Coombes. It's part of another investigation. We found the gun by accident. Marie was caught escaping out the back door with it when the police arrived. Do you know 137 Elmthorpe Drive at all, Mr. Coombes?"

The house, thought Leonard. Beer bottles crowded the front porch. Rob's rusted '86 Trans-Am sat on blocks in the driveway, the grass in the front yard was patchy, and a Confederate flag hung in the window. The ugly eyesore of a house at 137 Elmthorpe Drive, where his daughter spent half her life.

He nodded. "I know it," he said.

He couldn't figure out what Detective Dennis would want with shoes.

"The four men who live there all have records," said Dennis, "including Rob Sheehan. But Marie was the only one arrested. That's not right. She says it's her gun, and we've got her on a weapons charge, but we're convinced the gun doesn't belong to her, that she's just trying to protect one of the others, possibly Rob."

"Marie hates guns," said Leonard. "She would never own one."

Detective Dennis gave his chunky shoulders a shrug. "I would hate to see her get a criminal record for such a stupid thing," he said. "Especially when she's only seventeen. But she's not going to tell us who the gun belongs to. Which means we'll have to charge her. Which means she could go to jail."

Jail. He would do everything in his power to stop his daughter from going to jail. He would even ask his ex-wife, Peggy, for money, if that's what it took. Marie was the center of his life, the wellspring that gave everything meaning.

They stopped outside a grey metal door.

"Here we are," said Detective Dennis. He opened the door. "Just ring the buzzer for the guard when you want to go."

He went inside. The visiting area had tables, couches, and chairs arranged in small groupings, a play area for children, and a ping-pong table next to a row of vending machines. Everyone turned and looked at him. Small man with a tin leg, shouldn't have gone to Vietnam in the first place. Marie sat with Rob near the record player. They were, he thought with some consternation, a couple.

He hobbled across the floor, irritated that Rob should be so tall and perfect. Rob wore a scrupulously clean pair of jeans and a denim jacket. Leonard's own jacket had a grease stain on the front.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Dad," said Marie, rising. "I didn't expect you to get here so soon."

Leonard looked up at Rob with icy politeness.

"Rob, I'd like a word with my daughter. In private, please."

Rob gave him a friendly smile. "Right on, Mr. Coombes," he said. "I was just leaving anyway."

Right on. Groovy. Far out. Rob never failed with the sixties slang when Leonard was around. A way of getting under Leonard's skin. Rob gave Marie a kiss and walked across the room to the exit. Leonard sat down next to Marie, carefully arranging his leg under the coffee table. Nothing bothered him more than when Rob kissed his daughter.

"Well," he finally said, "let's hear your side of the story. You told the police it was your gun. They don't believe you and neither do I. Whose gun is it?"

She leaned forward, primly folding her hands in her lap, her eyes narrowing. She wore too much make-up now, he thought, and the black leather pants made her look as if she belonged on the back of some biker's Harley.

"Dad, the point is, I have to say it's my gun."

"Why?"

"Because I'm a first-time offender and I won't go to jail. All the others will."

Friendship, thought Leonard. How strong the bonds that join us when we are young. Or love. Perhaps she was doing this for Rob, as the detective had suggested.

"Yes, but sweetheart, even if you don't go to jail, you're going to have a criminal record. Has Detective Dennis explained how that might hamper your life?"

"Dad, I know what I'm doing."

"No, Marie, I don't think you do."

They argued about it for another half hour. When he left, he was frustrated and annoyed. She was as stubborn as Peg.

Detective Dennis met him outside and they walked down the corridor to the front lobby, where, through the big windows, Leonard saw the cars and trucks going by on Broadmoor Avenue.

"Any luck?" asked Detective Dennis.

"No," said Leonard, his voice sullen. "But you're right. It's not her gun. She wants to know when her bail hearing is."

The detective's bullish face reddened, and he glanced away, embarrassed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Mr. Coombes, I don't know whether there'll be a bail hearing. The fact is, Marie's in deeper water than she actually thinks."

"I don't follow you."

"Why don't you sit down here? You look as if your leg's bothering you. And this might take a while."

Bad news. He could see it written all over the detective's face. Dennis was right. His leg was killing him. He sat down while the detective went to the vending machine and got them coffee. Couldn't take too long. He had to get back to the shop.

Dennis sat down next to him.

"I got you regular. I hope that's okay."

"Fine," said Leonard.

"Mr. Coombes, our firearms identification section has determined that the gun Marie tried to hide was used in the murder of a Riverdale-area man three months ago. We believe that one of the men living at 137 Elmthorpe Drive is responsible for the murder. And if the evidence from the crime scene is any indication, that man is most probably Rob Sheehan."

Leonard shook his head. "I don't believe this," he said.

"The murder was committed in a park near Elmthorpe Drive. The ground was wet and we found several good footprints."

Leonard nodded in sudden understanding. "The shoes," he said. "At Rob's house."

"That's right," said Dennis. "At the park that night there were three sets of prints. The victim's, Rob Sheehan's, and Craig Donaldson's, a friend of Rob's. When you look at the prints and compare them to the angle at which the bullet entered the victim's body, you reach one inescapable conclusion. That Rob's the killer."

"Do you think my daughter knows anything about this?" asked Leonard.

"I don't know. Certainly she would make our case a lot stronger if she came forward and identified the gun's owner. This has been a particularly trying investigation for us, Mr. Coombes, and we've just about run out of patience. If she refuses to cooperate, we'll go forward with the weapons charge, and I'll recommend a jail sentence to the trial judge."

Leonard began to sweat again. Why did he sweat so much? He would have to see his doctor about it. Only he hated doctors.

"You can't do that," he said. "She's only seventeen and she's never been charged with anything before."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Then you're going to have to help us, Mr. Coombes. You're her father. She might tell you things she wouldn't tell us. I'm willing to make you a deal. You say you want Rob out of your daughter's life. Here's your opportunity."

He looked at Dennis skeptically. Ever since his army days he had taken an instant loathing to authority, and Dennis was no exception.

"What do I have to do?" he asked.

A sudden flashback. He suffered from spine-chilling flashbacks all the time. He was in-country, somewhere near Da Nang. *That hill, Sergeant. You have to take that hill. That's what you have to do.*

"Just wear this the next time you talk to her," said Dennis, holding up a dime-sized perforated disk. "It's a roaming wireless bug. We call them pocket bugs."

At the video shop that afternoon, Leonard couldn't make up his mind. He stayed behind the counter with his coffee and cigarettes, letting his two Vietnamese employees help the customers as he puzzled through his dilemma.

In the bleak years following his return from Vietnam, Marie had been the one bright spot in his life. As the blue cigarette smoke drifted past his eyes, he saw a four-year-old Marie running through a field of dandelions toward him, watched her attempt a clumsy cartwheel and topple into Peg's lap. It hadn't been easy for them. Especially when Peg left. No custody battle, you take her, Len, I've got my career to think about, as if Marie were an unwanted dog or cat, and not her daughter; her career as an artist, a painter. Peg was good, she was having shows on the West Coast now, she had made a success of herself. She had it all. Leonard smiled. But she didn't have Marie. And Marie was worth more than a hundred successful careers.

A customer came to the counter and returned a video. Leonard catalogued it away in the science fiction section on the top shelf. Busy today. Always busy on a Friday. For the first time in his life he was making a go of something, proving to himself and others he could succeed despite his crippled body and psychological scars. Paying off his debts. Next year he would have the money to buy a house. Marie would have her own room, wouldn't have to sleep on the fold-out any more, and they would live affluent and happy lives, like everybody else.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But now this. He took his cane from the hook and walked to the PC on the counter to check the day's entries. All the copies of the new Kevin Costner had been rented. So had the new Bette Midler. Now this. Rob Sheehan, a murderer. His daughter's boyfriend. Was hatred too strong a word? Sometimes he didn't think so, though he had vowed never to hate anybody ever again after coming home from Vietnam. Drugs. With Rob's good looks and brains, he shouldn't have to sell drugs. Yet Leonard didn't hate him for selling drugs, especially because during the late sixties he had been a stalwart subscriber to the drug and counter-culture lifestyle. No, he didn't hate the drugs. He hated Rob's good looks and brains, hated him because he had become Marie's hero, the dashing, charming, handsome rebel who dabbled on the wrong side of the law not for gain but for glamour, a glamour Marie had become enthralled with.

He hobbled away from his computer and sat down on his stool. At one time he had been the hero in Marie's life, the infallible father who always looked after her, and who always loved her. Now he couldn't shake the feeling he had been relegated to a tragicomic role, a figure for Marie's pity, even contempt, all because of Rob.

He pulled another cigarette out and lit up. No drugs now, just cigarettes and coffee. His life had almost derailed on the booze route. *I want you to take that hill, Sergeant, that's what you have to do.* If that's what he had to do to stop his daughter from going to prison, then that's what he would do. Flashback. *The earth jumped up in a red smoky explosion. Claymore. One of their own effing mines. He sat in a pool of blood wondering why he couldn't get up. Sergeant, I want you to take that hill.* If that's what he had to do to get rid of Rob—tall, perfect Rob—then he would take that hill, no matter what the cost. He would hate this one last time, he would wear the pocket bug, and then he would never hate again. More than anything else, he wanted to be the hero of Marie's life again.

The next day he met Detective Peter Dennis in the front foyer of the Broadmoor East Detention Center. Pig. Sixties slang for cop. A big thing back in those days to question authority, and yet here he was, as much of a pig as Dennis, cooperating with authorities to send one of America's rebellious youth to jail. He didn't know whom he hated more, himself or Dennis. Dennis pinned the pocket bug to the underside of Leonard's lapel.

"It's got a range of a hundred yards," said Dennis. "We should pick you up loud and clear."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How is she?"

They started down the hallway to the women's ward.

"She was fine until a half hour ago."

"Why, what's happened?"

Dennis gave him a gruff shrug. "I told her what we've got. To soften her up. I told her we have Rob Sheehan in custody."

"Do you?"

"No. I wish to God we did. Maybe by the end of the day we will."

"She still goes free no matter what she says," reminded Leonard. "Even if you can't use it."

"That's my deal."

They walked this time not to the visitors' area, but to Wing B of the women's block. A matronly female guard gave Leonard a visitor's tag, keyed in the security code on the console, and took them down the corridor to Marie's holding cell. The guard rapped a few times, peered through the small netted-glass window to make sure Marie was decent, then took her keys from her belt and unlocked the door.

Leonard found Marie sitting on the edge of the bed. No makeup today. She looked about thirteen. Her blonde hair hung forward and she fiddled with a stray lock, twisting it around her finger, examining the tips for split ends. She glanced up at him and managed a half-hearted smile. Her eyes were puffy and red. The pocket bug felt heavy on Leonard's lapel.

"They have Rob in custody," she said. "They say he killed that man."

He sat on the bed beside her and put his arm around her shoulder. "Marie, I understand how hard this must be for you, and I know how much Rob means to you."

"I wish you would learn to like him, Daddy," she said. "He's really not that bad."

Daddy. She hadn't called him that since . . . well, since Peg left.

"I wish I could, too, Marie. But I don't think there's any chance of that now. Not after he killed someone."

"Dad, you killed women and children in the war." That stung. She was the only one who knew where all his soft spots were.

"War is different, sweetheart. Sometimes you don't know who or what you're shooting at."

"Rob didn't kill that man."

"Detective Dennis says the evidence is against him. Did he tell you about the footprints they found in the park? Sweetheart, Rob's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bad news. I know you think he's the only man in the world right now, but you're only seventeen. Trust me. There'll be others. And for God's sake, if you're having sex with him, I hope you're using all the modern precautions."

"You don't have to worry about that, Dad."

"Marie, I don't see what you think you're going to gain by telling the police the gun belongs to you. You're going to go to jail. Dennis is going to make sure of that. All because it's no ordinary gun. It's a murder weapon. Even if they can't convict Rob, do you think he's going to be waiting for you when you get out?"

"He'll be there, Daddy. Rob loves me."

Leonard gazed at the seatless toilet in the corner, wondering how he was going to get through to her.

"How can you be so certain, sweetheart? Two, maybe three years. That's a long time for a young man like Rob. Tell me how you can be so certain."

She hesitated, brushed her hand through her hair, then gave him a skulking sideways glance. "Because I saved his life, Dad."

He grew suddenly warm, and as was so often the case when he grew warm, he began to sweat. This road, traveled with great apprehension, now took an unexpected and unwanted turn. She got up, agitated, close to tears. The pocket bug made him itch. Defy authority. The pig could go rooting for his information somewhere else. Change the subject.

"All I want is your happiness, sweetheart. I want us to go back to the way we were before Rob came along."

"Rob didn't kill that man, Daddy."

"It's all right, sweetheart, you don't have to say anything more."

"The man owed Rob money, Dad. Rob was mad."

"Please, sweetheart."

"The man drew a knife and came at Rob. I was holding Rob's gun that night. I wasn't going to let him stab Rob. I couldn't do that, could I, Daddy? So I shot him. I didn't mean to kill him, Daddy. I shot for his legs but I guess I got him in the chest. I was the one who killed him, Daddy. Not Rob. I had to save Rob's life. I had no choice."

"But sweetheart, you weren't there. Your footprints weren't there."

"I was in the car, Daddy. Parked at the curb."

I want us to go back to the way we were before, he thought. He heard Detective Dennis walking down the corridor with urgent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

steps. He would take that hill one more time. Last time he had lost his leg, this time he would lose his daughter. Hatred always had a way of turning back on itself. He was on the ground in a pool of blood, wondering why he couldn't get up. He ripped the pocket bug from his lapel and crushed it underfoot. A gesture of despair, he thought, one that wouldn't help matters now, like throwing down his M-16 in disgust when he finally understood why he couldn't get up. Marie looked down at the floor.

"What's that, Daddy?" she asked.

Detective Dennis opened the door and came inside, his face grave, as red as a rare side of beef.

"Nothing, sweetheart," said Leonard. Words wouldn't help matters now. "Nothing at all."

"Q"

Argentinian writer Marco Denevi has published ten volumes of short stories and several novels. Many readers will know him as the author of the short story "Secret Ceremony," which was made into a movie starring Robert Mitchum, Elizabeth Taylor, and Mia Farrow.

THE EMPEROR OF CHINA

by MARCO DENEVI

When the Emperor of China died in his great bed in the deepest recesses of the Imperial Palace, no one received word of his death. Everyone was too busy carrying out his orders. The only person to realize what had happened was the Prime Minister, an ambitious man who had aspirations to the throne. He said nothing and hid the body. A year passed, of extraordinary prosperity for the empire. Then, finally, the Prime Minister revealed to the people the Emperor's remains.

"You see?" he said. "For an entire year death has been seated on the throne. I deserve to be Emperor."

The subjects, persuaded by his argument, placed him on the throne and then killed him, so that the prosperity of the empire might continue uninterrupted.

Translated by Donald A. Yates

Copyright © 1960 by Marco Denevi, © renewed 1987.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREE GIFT

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Save over 15% and receive a FREE mug.

Last year *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* celebrated its 50th year as the best in detective laden suspense stories...By popular demand, we are making the 50th anniversary commemorative mug available, **FREE** with your paid subscription.

Each issue is filled with exciting who-dunits...so enjoy great mystery reading at a great price and receive this **FREE** mug...just for subscribing.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE
P.O. Box 7052
Red Oak, IA 51591

☐ **YES,** send me 18 issues of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* for only $31.95. I save over 15% off the basic price & receive a FREE mug upon receipt of payment.

☐ **YES,** send me 12 issues for only $23.95.

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me

☐ Charge ☐ MC ☐ VISA

HGSC-9

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Card #_____

Exp. Date_____

Signature_____

Current subscribers, for mug only, please send a check or money order payable to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* for $6.00. Mail to: P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The author of three young-adult novels published by Dodd Mead in the sixties (including the 1967 Edgar Allan Poe award winner Signpost to Terror), *Gretchen Sprague took a law degree in the seventies and practiced poverty law for eleven years with South Brooklyn Legal Services. This is her first mystery short story and her first published fiction since she retired from the law and returned to writing full-time. . . .*

CAN YOU HEAR ME?

by GRETCHEN SPRAGUE

When the lawnmower roar died, Margaret laid the knitting in her lap and rolled herself to the window. Down on the graveled drive, through the scarlet screen of maple leaves, she could see his sweat-matted sun-bleached hair.

She prepared her clumsy tongue for the call: "A-a-a—" wrenched the unwieldy flap toward the L-curl "—DHan." Alan. "A-a-DH-an. Cannh you heahh me?"

His evil sun-brown face turned upward. Sun-bleached fair eyebrows over candid, evil blue eyes. "Sure can, Miz Perkins. Hear you just fine. You ready for your lunch?"

"Rea-dhy."

"Half a sec." His muscular shoulders moved as he heaved the mower up the ramp into the truckbed of his pickup. He slammed up the tailgate and again she could see it, red, filmed with dust, a big dent just off-center flanked by two yellow bumper stickers: MAKE MY DAY; I BRAKE FOR BLONDES. She could see the broken left taillight. Still broken.

(One taillight white, one red, dwindling, LURCH, dwindling JOLT—curl harness-hampered body around the little body, fold around PAIN—)

Laura Lauralee Lorelie—

Tears ached behind her eyes and oozed wet over her lower lids.

Fran didn't remember the pickup.

© *1992 by Gretchen Sprague.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She picked tissues from the pocket in the arm of the wheelchair and scrubbed away the oozing weakness.

In her lap, under the knitting, the pistol grip nestled in her hand.

Her hands were still strong, still hers, not like those useless legs inside the meaningless stockings, that all but useless flap of a tongue.

She heard his steps, steady and firm on the carpeted stairs. Indoors he'd have his shirt on, blue plaid covering the sun-brown back, sleeves rolled to his biceps, strong brown arms carrying the tray through the door.

He chattered: "I heard you real good, Miz Perkins." It was her tongue; her tongue made him nervous. Not the evil he'd done, not the evil he did, laughing, young, day in, day out.

She heard the tray come down on the wheeled table by the door, a faint clink of fork against plate.

(Dwindling up the road in the dusk in his dirty red pickup, seventy-five at least on the narrow blacktop, he never even knew they'd gone over. Fran never remembered the pickup, barely remembered the skid and the roll—)

"I heard you fine," he said too loud. "You sure sound good."

Liar. Killer. Her eyes squeezed shut against the hateful sight of him, she wrestled with her tongue. "Kiddher."

"Would I kid you?" The table wheels rumbled softly on bare wood, hitched over the rug fringe, whispered on the rug.

Under the knitting, her palm warmed the pistol grip.

He was near her now. His work-sweat drifted up her nostrils.

Under the knitting her finger eased into the trigger guard; her strong able hand lifted the comfortable warm little gun, slanted the neat little muzzle through the soft wool, aiming just above his big buffalo-head buckle, squeezed the neat little trigger, squeezed again, squeezed, not counting, the warm little metal grip scarcely bucking in her hand until the hammer clicked against nothing—

"Oh, Momma!" Fran's anxious chatter. "You never ate a *thing*. Momma, you mustn't—please, try—we try so hard—"

Her empty hands were sweaty under the knitting. She forced her eyes open.

Wilted salad; oily scum on the cold tea; rancid smell from the warm milk.

"Nodt hunghhy."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, Momma. You've got to keep your strength up. Please try. We try so hard. Jack pays Alan extra just to bring up your tray—"

"Kiddher," cherishing the word, her tongue keeping her secret.

"He kids because he's young. Please, Momma, come with me to the support group next week. We both feel guilty, letting her ride on your lap, not making her sit in the kiddy seat, but it wasn't your fault, the ice wasn't your fault—"

Fran didn't remember the pickup.

Still crying. Nine months past and Fran still crying. Fran begging, "Please come with me, Momma. They're so much help at the group."

Daughter. Crying. No comfort. Margaret reached her sweaty hand from under the knitting and took her grieving daughter's hand.

But from downstairs, "Miz Carter!" The strong young killer's voice called, and Fran answered in her public voice, "Coming, Alan!" and again softly, "Please come, Momma. They're so much help."

Winter and spring past, summer past. Grief never. Lie, Margaret, no other comfort. "I'dh—" wrestling with the clumsy tongue "—I'dh think abouth idt."

("Frances, Jack, Margaret," —pious old fraud in the turned-around collar beside her hospital bed, Fran and Jack standing next to him beside the IV rig— "we weep for our beloved Laura, but she is with the angels—")

She could hear the killer's voice, drifting up from the downstairs hall: "I'm real sorry, Miz Carter. This is gonna have to be my last time."

"Oh, dear, what's wrong? You do such a good job."

"Well, yeah, thanks. What happened, I got in a little trouble a couple weeks ago, a real bummer, hit some loose gravel and rolled my girlfriend's car, right in front of the sheriff's patrol."

Evil.

(Lurching, the pickup receding, dirty red, stickers glowing yellow, MAKE MY DAY dwindling; jolting, battering—no time, no place—sirens—silence— Fading in "—okay, now." Unhurried voices, "Hang on, we'll—" fading out, fading in—Fran loud in her ear, "Get Laura! Get *Laura,* I'm okay, get Laura, she's on Momma's lap, get Laura" —no time, no place— *"Laura!* Oh *God* oh dear God!")

Margaret alone remembered the pickup. From the beginning, even before her shattered thoughts had tumbled into order, long before she could wrestle her unwieldy tongue around words, the pickup was embedded in her, a deep hard secret growth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(At early dusk, heading into the blind curve, the pickup doing seventy-five at least in a forty-mile zone on the little blacktop, pulling alongside across the double yellow line into the oncoming lane, racing them, pulling ahead, car lights coming at them around the curve, the dirty red pickup cutting back nearly clipping Fran's front fender—)

Fran remembered none of it.

(—braked hard and the pickup missed them—)

Leave to Fran the memories Fran could manage. January at dusk and they hit an ice patch.

Downstairs in the hall he was saying, "Nobody got hurt anything to talk about" —not this time, no young killer— "but the deputies were all over me like Aunt Jemima on a stack. Got me but good." He drawled it out, "Go-od," his evil just a joke. "You know how they rig the Breathalyzer, but what're you going to do. I told the judge, listen, if you lift my license you're just gonna have another body on welfare because I drive the truck for work. So he gave me community service, heavy, every night and weekends."

"Oh, dear. For how long?"

"A year."

"Oh, dear, and there's all that work left to do—it's so hard to get anyone reliable—"

"Well, I'll tell you. It doesn't start until Monday. I could come tomorrow, anyway. What I could do is come around tomorrow and split those logs I've been piling up. That way, all you'll have to do is some blowing after all the leaves are down."

"Gramma!" Laura at the back door.

Laura? Laura at the door? Then it must be over!

"Come out and look at my snow angels, Gramma."

"Laura!"

My tongue!

"Laura Lauralee Lorelie!"

My tongue is back! I'm running, my legs are back! Running, to the door. She's letting herself be hugged; she's warm—

"Come see my angels, Gramma."

I must make her be real.

"What lovely angels, Laura Love."

L L L Lalala—Can it be real? I'm too warm. It can't be real, I'm out here without my jacket, I mustn't be warm, it isn't real to be warm. I must make myself cold—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not real angels, Gramma, snow angels."
"Laura, be real!"
"Not real, Gramma."
Laura, be real! Laura, stay! Laura! Lorelie—"
"Dhoredhie," her useless tongue cried into the October night.

Fran, Sunday morning in her navy suit and pearls— "Momma, I wish you'd come to church with us. I know you'd feel better."
"Piouths ol fraudh."
"Oh, Momma—"
"Dhon' cry."
Anxiously buttoning and unbuttoning the middle button of her suit jacket, "You need to get out more."
"I'm okhay."
"Well—" Still worrying at the button. On the drive, the petulant blast of the horn. "Well, Alan'll be here if you need anything. Don't you want Jack to take you downstairs before we go?"
"I'm finhe."
"You're sure?"
"I'm *finhe. Go.* Go to chthurchth."

She could hear the maul—donk, donk, donk—thunking against the wedge at the woodpile behind the garage.
Her strong hands rolled her over the tangled rug fringe onto the polished wood floor, over the humped sill and out the door, down the hall past the bathroom, past the closed door of Laura's room, over the sill onto the yielding carpet of Fran and Jack's room. Across the carpet to the bureau. Pushed the brake to lock the wheels. Levered her body upright, strong hands on the arms of the chair, propped herself on nearly useless legs, bracing one hand on top of the bureau while, one-handed, she opened the long top drawer and fumbled behind Jack's socks for the envelope with the key.
Felt it, grasped it, pulled it into daylight.
Clumsily lowered herself into the chair and rolled across the carpet to the nightstand on the right side of the bed. Shook the key into her hand, fitted it into the lock on the top drawer of the nightstand. Turned it, hearing the neat little click.
Found the little five-inch .22 at the back, behind the Bible.
Broke it open. The cylinder was full. Clicked it shut and laid it in her lap.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pushed the drawer shut, leaving the key in the lock; rolled back to her room.

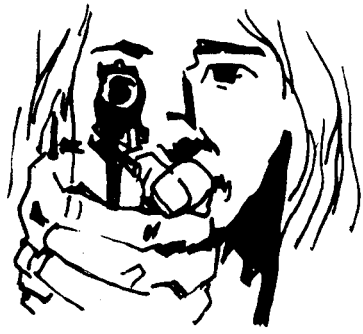
Picked up the knitting from the wheeled table with able hands and spread it over her lap.

Rolled herself to the open window and listened until she heard the faint *chunk-chungle* of a split log rolling off the chopping block.

Under the knitting, the crosshatching on the grip was grainy against her sweaty hand, as hard and comforting as rage. She prepared her clumsy tongue.

He would straighten his shoulders for an instant before reaching for the next log. The breeze smelled of opened-up wood and dry leaves.

"A-a-dhan! *A-A-DHAN! CANH YOU HEAHH ME?*"



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Dr. Sam Hawthorne story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Mysteries of the "impossible crime" variety are rare these days, but Ed Hoch has created such a puzzle here, a case of the type immortalized in Ellery Queen's "The Disappearance of Mr. James Phillimore," in which a suspect disappears in plain sight, in front of witnesses. . . .

THE PROBLEM OF THE VANISHING SALESMAN

by EDWARD D. HOCH

Well, we had a lot of strange crimes during my younger days in Northmont (old Dr. Sam Hawthorne told his visitor as he reached for the brandy), but none was stranger than the disappearance of Mr. James Philby, a man who vanished but kept insisting he hadn't. Let me pour you a small libation, then settle back in your chair while I tell you about it.

It was early May of '37, a busy month that would see the Hindenburg dirigible disaster and the crowning of George VI as king of England. Such world-shaking events had little impact on Northmont, however, where the talk was more likely to run to the weather and spring planting. It was the season when traveling salesmen were most likely to begin their annual rounds.

James Philby was a relatively young man in his early thirties who'd been driving through southern New England the previous summer selling everything from lightning rods to butter churns. I'd chatted with him a couple of times when his route through town happened to coincide with my house calls. I hadn't thought about him all winter, but now it was May and here he was back again.

© *1992 by Edward D. Hoch.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Philby drove a green four-door Nash whose back seat and trunk were loaded with his samples. He carried some of the smaller products with him and sold them right from the car, but for the bigger things there were only samples—or more likely a photograph in one of the catalogues stuffed into the trunk. He was a handsome sort, with black hair that he wore slicked back, and a thin mustache like Clark Gable had in the movies. The farm wives often greeted him with a friendly cup of coffee while their husbands and sons were out plowing in the fields.

I encountered him at the widow Gaines's place on the highroad, just coming out of the driveway. Her name was Abby Gaines and she wasn't yet fifty, but since her husband's death she'd become the widow Gaines to the community. The farm had been sold off to Douglas Crawford, her neighbor to the north, and she lived alone in the little farmhouse with a white picket fence. Philby stopped the Nash and leaned out the window. "Hello, Doc. Remember me?"

"James Philby, isn't it?"

"Right you are," he answered with a grin. "I'm back on my spring route. Just sold the lady a new lightning rod for her barn and—" He smacked the side of his head. "Forgot my samples!"

He was out of the car and trotting back to the farmhouse, leaving me sitting there in my car. "Hey, Philby! You've got me blocked. I can't get in." It was true. The Nash had stopped right in the middle of the narrow gravel driveway, and the white picket fence prevented me from driving around it on the grass.

"I'll only be a second, Doc," he assured me over his shoulder.

I sighed and tapped my fingers impatiently on the steering wheel. I'd already started my turn when I paused to let him out, and then he stopped to speak to me, blocking my entrance. Now I watched him return to the side porch, knock, and open the big storm door that was left over from winter. It was solid wood, with even its little window covered by cardboard, so I could see nothing of him from my angle.

As the seconds lengthened into minutes, my patience began to run out. True, my house call on Abby Gaines wasn't a medical emergency. I was merely checking on an infection for which I'd previously treated her. But after another two minutes I left my car and went up to the door I'd seen Philby enter. I pulled open the storm door, and called through the doorway. "Philby! Are you in there? Come and move your car."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Abby Gaines appeared from the kitchen at once, holding a wooden spoon. "Dr. Hawthorne—I didn't know you were here!"

"That salesman Philby has me blocked in your driveway. Where is he?"

"Philby? He left about ten minutes ago."

"I know, but he came back. He said he forgot the samples of the lightning rods he was showing you."

She looked baffled for just an instant. "That's right—he left them leaning against the wall by the front door and they're gone now. But I didn't hear him come back. The floor would have squeaked."

"Could he be somewhere in the house?" I glanced at the stairway to the second floor.

"I know I'd have heard him if he came in, but we can take a look." She led me quickly through the first-floor rooms—a front parlor, sitting room, kitchen, and an inside bathroom that was a recent addition. At the back of the house, off the kitchen, was a large woodshed that served as a general storage area. There were two other doors to it, from outside. One at the back, facing the barn, stood slightly ajar. The other was bolted from the inside. I opened it and saw that I was on the far end of the side porch, some ten feet from the door Philby had entered. We went upstairs next, inspecting each of the four bedrooms and a storage area that served in place of an attic.

"You can see he's nowhere in here," Abby Gaines said, opening the last of the closet doors. "You must have been mistaken."

I pulled the curtain aside and pointed down at the driveway. "You can see his car's still there. He came back for his lightning rods and vanished."

"Oh, surely not! You've been reading too many of those thrillers, Doctor."

"What about the basement?"

"There's no access to it from the house. You have to go through the outside doors. I had the stairway blocked when I added the inside bathroom, after Jesse died." Jesse Gaines had been her husband for more than twenty years.

We went back downstairs and I decided to ignore the missing salesman for the moment while I tended to my patient. I got my bag from the car and examined Mrs. Gaines. The infection was much improved and I instructed her to continue with the medication for another week.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As she walked out on the porch with me, I motioned toward the cars at the beginning of her driveway and said, "I don't know what you're going to do with Philby's car. I can't imagine what happened to him."

"Oh, I'm sure he'll turn up."

I wasn't nearly so sure, having seen the man vanish before my own eyes, but I got into my own car, waved to her, and backed onto the road. Later in the day, when I was back in the office, I told my nurse Mary Best about the strange occurrence.

"There must be some explanation," she said, busy at her desk.

"I think I'll give Abby Gaines a call and see if he turned up."

She answered on the second ring, and when I asked about James Philby she replied, "Well, I guess he came back because the car is gone."

"But you didn't see him?"

"No. I was lying down for a few minutes. I may have dozed off."

I hung up and told Mary, "I guess he came back."

"Of course he did, Sam! Not everybody who drops out of sight for a few minutes simply vanishes."

Her voice was firm and her words sensible. But I was the one who'd sat in the car and watched him step onto Abby Gaines's porch.

It was two days later that I was driving out the highroad past the Gaines house when I noticed a car in the driveway. It wasn't the green Nash but a black Ford belonging to Douglas Crawford, the neighbor who'd bought the Gaines farmland after Jesse's death. I hadn't seen Crawford to speak to recently and I decided to stop. This time, to keep from blocking anyone, I pulled onto the shoulder of the road and left my car outside the white picket fence.

Douglas Crawford was a big sandy-haired man who smiled a lot. His eyes always seemed to be squinting against the sun, and his handsome wife Eileen was constantly after him to wear sunglasses. "Looks like you got something to hide," Crawford would respond, and in truth he seemed one of the most open men in Northmont.

Right now he was carrying two large cans of maple syrup up to the porch. He held one under his arm while he rang the doorbell, but he didn't wait for a reply. He opened the woodshed door and placed the cans inside.

"Hello, Douglas," Abby Gaines said as she opened the door.

"Brought you some maple syrup. Put it in the woodshed."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I do thank you. That's very thoughtful." At that moment she saw me coming up the driveway. "Oh, hello, Dr. Hawthorne. I wasn't expecting you."

Crawford turned and we shook hands. "Howdy, Doc. Haven't seen you around lately."

"It was a bad winter for the flu. Things are better now. Maybe I can relax a bit."

"Ever play any golf? They've opened a nice new course over in Shinn Corners."

"I'll have to take it up."

He came down the porch steps, waving back at Abby Gaines. "Enjoy the maple syrup."

"I will! Thank you again."

He went off in his car and I turned my attention to Abby. "I was driving by and I thought I'd see how you're feeling."

"Much better, thank you."

"Good, good!" I edged into the real reason for my visit. "Have you seen any more of that salesman, Philby?"

"Not yet. I ordered a pair of his lightning rods for the roof but he hasn't delivered them yet."

"That's odd."

"He said it might take a week. I'm in no hurry."

"I don't know that anyone has seen him since the other day out here."

"I'm sure he'll turn up."

I left her standing on the porch, after suggesting she lock her door. The storm door was still in place, and I supposed she had to find someone who would take it down for her. Being a widow all alone is never easy.

The following day was Saturday, and I'd agreed to accompany Mary Best on an outing with some convalescent children from a hospital in the adjoining county. We spent an enjoyable afternoon among them, and I marveled at Mary's skill in mingling with the children as an equal.

Watching her playing with them, I almost missed the green Nash as it drove by on the dirt road, fast enough to trail a cloud of dust. "That's Philby's car," I told her. "I'm going after him."

She was too busy with the children to give it more than a glance, but she offered a "Be careful!" as I sprinted off toward my car. In the old days, when I'd owned a succession of high-powered sports cars, I might have caught him at the first hill despite the dust, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'd turned more conservative with my most recent car purchase, settling comfortably into a Buick sedan. I closed the windows tight and set off after the Nash, plowing into the dust cloud as I gained on it. There was one advantage to all the dust—he couldn't see me coming until I was right on top of him. I honked my horn repeatedly and he pulled to the side of the road.

In that instant, as I emerged from my car and strode over to the Nash, I had a sudden doubt as to who I would find there. Somehow I still considered James Philby as one of the missing.

The door opened on the driver's side and Philby got out. "What's going on, Doc?" he asked with his customary grin. "You nearly ran me off the road."

He was the same man, short and handsome with his slick black hair and Clark Gable mustache. He had vanished and now he was back, acting like nothing had happened. "You disappeared up at the Gaines place. I was worried about you. No one has seen you."

"Lots of people have seen me. I've been around the towns selling my lightning rods and things. Spring is the best time to sell lightning rods. The old ones might have been damaged by winter storms."

"What happened to you the other day at the Gaines house? You walked up on her porch and disappeared."

"I went after my lightning rod samples. Then I walked back to the barn to check the rods out there. She doesn't use the barn anymore, but it could still be hit by lightning."

"I was watching that porch every minute, Philby. You never left it, and Abby Gaines says you didn't enter the house."

"You blinked, Doc. Or maybe you dozed off for a moment."

"I never took my eyes off the porch because I was waiting for you to come back and move your car out of my way."

He shrugged and changed the subject. "Want to buy a lightning rod, Doc? I've got a popular model here with a weather vane on it, tells you which way the wind's blowing."

"Not today, thanks," I responded, though in truth I could have used something that told me which way the wind was blowing. I seemed to have a mystery without a crime, but I had a chilly feeling that those circumstances were about to change. I returned to my car and drove back to join Mary and the children.

Douglas Crawford's wife Eileen was a big-boned woman with shoulders as broad as a man's. She was handsome rather than attractive, and I was used to seeing her in town two or three times a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

week, shopping and picking up supplies for the farm. On Monday morning when I spotted her lifting sacks of fertilizer into the back of her small truck, I crossed the street and asked if I could help.

"Thank you, Dr. Hawthorne. I have it under control." She heaved the final bag into the truck.

"I wonder if you could help me with something. Do you know a traveling salesman named James Philby?"

She squinted at me, the sun in her eyes, and replied, "I know him. He was around late last summer, even helped Douglas with the harvest once or twice. Peeled off his shirt and worked right along with the rest of the men. My husband liked him better than I did."

"Seen much of him this spring?"

"He stopped by once with his lightning rods, but we didn't need any."

"What sort of man is he? I've met him only briefly a few times."

"He's all right, I suppose. I thought he forced his friendship on us a bit suddenly. I'd watch him working with Douglas in the field last summer and wonder what he was trying to sell us."

"Did you ever find out?"

She shook her head. "We bought a sundial from him, that was all. I gave him supper and he spilled a bowl of soup."

"A sundial," I repeated. "An odd item for him to be selling."

"What's odd about it?"

"No one relies on sundials any more. They're merely decorative. Everything else that Philby sells is useful."

She smiled at my reasoning. "I doubt that Philby bothers to make the distinction." She closed the back of her truck and slid behind the steering wheel. "Stop in and see us when you're out our way."

"I'll do that," I promised.

But the whole affair continued to prey on my mind. I'd seen James Philby disappear on the porch of the Gaines farmhouse, even though he denied it. In a way, the denial was as much a mystery as the disappearance itself. Back at the office, Mary Best could see I was still troubled.

"You should forget about it, Sam," she advised. "Maybe you're starting to see mysteries where there aren't any."

Luckily, that Monday afternoon had a crowded schedule of office calls and I had little time to ponder the comings and goings of James Philby. It was the following afternoon, when I was free of appointments for a few hours, that I decided to drive over to Sheriff Lens's office at the jail.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The sheriff and I had been friends for years, ever since my arrival in Northmont in the 1920s. I occasionally saw him and his wife socially, and considered him my closest friend in the town, even with the difference in our ages. This day the jail was empty of prisoners and he'd just sent his deputy out for coffee.

"It's a slow time of year and I'm grateful for it. What's on your mind, Doc?"

I told him about the incident with James Philby. "It's been bothering me ever since it happened."

"Lettin' your imagination get the best of you, Doc. It don't sound like an impossible crime to me. There's no crime at all, and if you glanced away for a few seconds it wasn't impossible."

"You sound like Philby. I know what I saw."

"Maybe—" He was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone, and I got up to leave. "Sheriff Lens here," he said into the mouthpiece. He listened to a few words and his eyes went to mine. Something had happened. "Try to stay calm, Mrs. Crawford. Which way did he go?" Then, "All right, we're on our way. Doc Hawthorne is with me."

"What is it?" I asked as he hung up.

"That was Eileen Crawford. Her husband's just been shot by your salesman friend, Philby. She thinks he's dead."

We found Mrs. Crawford on the verge of hysteria, and I quickly gave her a capsule to calm her down. Douglas was sprawled on the floor near the front door, his chest torn by a bullet that had come out his back. It must have killed him instantly. "What happened?" Sheriff Lens asked. "Try to tell us exactly what happened."

"He—he pulled up in the driveway and got out. I could see him coming, carrying one of his lightning rods. I called to Douglas in the kitchen and asked if he'd ordered anything from Philby. He came in to see what I was talking about. Then he went to the screen door and opened it. He asked the salesman what he wanted, and then I heard the shot. Philby was carrying a rifle along with that lightning rod." She started to sob again, and I decided a stronger sleeping capsule might be the best thing for her now.

As I reached for her glass, the sheriff stayed my hand. "Just a minute, Doc. Mrs. Crawford, you said on the phone that he headed down the road in his car. Which way did he go?"

"Toward the Gaines place."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another car pulled up in the driveway, and the sheriff's deputy hurried in. The town ambulance was right behind him. Lens motioned for them to keep back for a moment. "Mrs. Crawford, do you know of any reason for him to have shot Douglas? Was there hard feeling between them?"

She shook her head. "Nothing. I remember once last year he mentioned that his father had known Douglas several years ago, but Douglas told me he didn't remember it."

"Stay with her," Lens told his deputy.

I gave her a capsule to help her sleep and then hurried after the sheriff. "Where do you think he went?" I asked.

"Hard to tell. If we'd have come by the Gaines place we might have seen him."

We turned down that way now, and as soon as we cleared a thick stand of pine trees I spotted the green Nash. "There he is! In the Gaines driveway!" He was parked just by the picket fence, blocking access as he had once before. As the sheriff's car approached, we saw him leave the vehicle and head for the side porch of Abby Gaines's house. He was carrying a lightning rod in one hand.

Sheriff Lens skidded to a stop behind the Nash and climbed out as fast as he could, drawing his revolver. "Stop right there, Philby!" he shouted. "You're under arrest." The little salesman turned toward us with a sort of smile, then pulled open the storm door, obscuring our view of him.

"Come on!" I yelled to the sheriff, breaking into a run.

The storm door had swung shut, revealing the empty porch, only this time the door to the house was locked. I rang the bell and then checked the woodshed door at the far end of the porch. It was locked too, just like the first time.

"What's all this?" Abby Gaines asked, opening the door to face the revolver in Sheriff Lens's hand.

"We want James Philby," the sheriff told her. "He just ran in here."

She seemed as baffled as the first time. "No one ran in here. The door was locked the whole while. I took Dr. Hawthorne's advice."

"I'll have to search," Sheriff Lens said, keeping his gun raised and ready.

"Of course, if you don't believe me." She turned to me for support. "Why would I lie about such a thing?"

"Douglas Crawford's been murdered," I explained somberly. "Eileen says Philby did it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"My God!" She sat down in the nearest chair. "What's this world coming to?"

I stayed with her while the sheriff completed his search. The feeling was growing inside me that he'd find nothing, just as I'd found nothing on the previous occasion. He searched both floors of the house, the woodshed, and even the basement which could be reached only from outside. He walked through the grass and weeds to the unused barn, but a quick look around turned up nothing but a family of small grass snakes beneath a toppled door.

"He's nowhere, Doc," the sheriff concluded, slipping his pistol back in its holster.

"Just like the first time. It's as if he stepped into another dimension."

"Why would he kill Douglas?" Abby asked.

"We don't quite know," Sheriff Lens replied. "I'm goin' to look over his car."

The green Nash yielded nothing but a salesman's samples. Among them I found one of the sundials the Crawfords had purchased from Philby last fall. It was only the metal top, really, without the supporting base. The gnomon that cast the shadow seemed sharp and just a bit dangerous. "I'd hate to fall against that," I told the sheriff.

"Not too likely." There were a couple more lightning rods in the car, laid across the back of the front passenger seat so they'd fit. The sheriff was especially interested in them, and finally on the floor beneath them he came up with what he wanted, partly hidden from sight by a reel of ground wire for the lightning rods. "Here's the rifle," he announced with a tone of triumph. "Been fired recently too. I'm surprised he left it."

"Maybe he didn't need it in that other dimension," I suggested.

I walked completely around the house, studying it from all angles. If Philby hadn't entered the house he'd gone somewhere else. The big storm door with its cardboard-covered window effectively obscured everything behind it when it was fully opened. Even the woodshed door couldn't be seen from out on the road, though it was locked and too far away to have helped Philby in his disappearance. Only the two doors led onto the porch, with a kitchen window between them. I tried to open it and couldn't.

"Nailed shut," Abby Gaines informed me. "My husband did it years ago because we get a terrible draft from the west wind. He packed insulating strips around it and nailed the whole thing."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She stood in the doorway and watched as I got down on my knees and tested the wooden boards of the porch. One seemed loose, but I could only lift it an inch or so. "He didn't go that way," I decided.

"You think I'm lying, don't you?"

I stared up at her. "No, I don't. But perhaps you're not telling us the correct version of the truth. James Philby vanished twice, both times on this porch. Assuming he did so voluntarily, he must have chosen this place for a reason. He must have felt you'd protect him somehow."

"That's rubbish!" She was angry now, not liking what I might be implying.

"Were you ever more than casual friends?"

"He's a salesman, for God's sake!"

"And you're a lonely widow."

"I resent your implication, Dr. Hawthorne."

It was best for us both that Sheriff Lens joined us at that moment, before I added to the words I was already regretting. I had no reason to accuse her of improprieties with James Philby. Perhaps it was only a sign of my growing frustration with the day's events. "I'm impounding the car," Lens announced as he joined us on the porch. "I'll have someone tow it into town. And I'd advise you to keep your doors and windows locked until we find him, Mrs. Gaines."

"You can be sure I'll do that."

The sheriff used her telephone to call his deputy up at the Crawford place, then we headed back into town. "This looks like another one of your locked rooms," he suggested on the way.

"Hardly that. It may be a locked house, but Philby was outside when he disappeared, not inside."

"How do you figure he did it?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," I admitted.

I'd left my car at the jail, and the sheriff dropped me off there, promising to keep me advised of developments. I drove back to my office in a wing of Pilgrim Memorial Hospital and checked my appointment schedule with Mary Best. It had been a quiet afternoon and the only scheduled patient had called to cancel. I told her about Douglas Crawford.

"It never stops, does it?"

"Doesn't seem to."

"Have they found Philby yet?"

"Sheriff Lens and I spotted him going into Abby Gaines's house."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She looked at my face, guessing what I was about to say. "Not again?"

"Yep. Opened the storm door and disappeared."

"She must have let him in."

"She says not. The sheriff searched the place and found nothing, just like I did last time."

Mary picked up a pad of paper and sat down at my desk. She was wearing her blonde hair short that season, and it gave her a studious, intense look. "What does this porch look like?"

I described it to her in detail as she made some notes and drew a few lines of a rough sketch. "Floor?" she asked.

"I checked it out. One loose board, but it only moved a few inches. Not room enough for him to slip under, anyway."

"You said he's a small man."

"Not that small. He's about five-five."

"Roof?"

"I'd have seen him above the storm door. There's nothing up there anyway. It's just a covering for the porch."

"How about this woodshed door?"

I shook my head. "That's out for two reasons. It was bolted from the inside and it was ten feet away. The storm door would have swung shut if Philby wasn't holding it, and then we would have seen him going toward the other door."

"So it gets down to Mrs. Gaines letting him into the house."

"Seems like it. But I searched the place the first time and the sheriff searched it today. It's not that big a house."

The sheriff himself came by a little later in the afternoon, looking perplexed. "No sign of him anywhere. I've got the state police watching the roads in case he had another vehicle waiting, but that don't seem too likely."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Well, he was very deliberate about leavin' his car at the Gaines house, Doc. It was almost as if he sat in the driveway waitin' till he saw us coming."

I'd considered the same possibility, even though it didn't make a great deal of sense. Philby couldn't have known I'd be in the car, but maybe he was just waiting for the sheriff.

"Maybe he's hiding in the house waiting for dark," Mary Best suggested. "Waiting for Abby Gaines to drive him across the state line."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sheriff Lens grunted. "And maybe he ran around the house and hid in the trunk of my patrol car while we were in the house. But I doubt it."

Mary was not about to be put off by his banter. "Have you looked in your trunk, Sheriff?"

"Hell, no!"

She insisted on taking his keys, marching out to the parking lot, and opening the trunk while we watched through my office window. She seemed disappointed when she lifted the lid to reveal a spare tire and some tools. "All right," she told us when she returned, handing him back his keys, "So Philby wasn't in there. But he has to be somewhere. And I'm going to figure out where."

We went over everything again, mainly for her benefit, though I knew from my own experience that it never hurts to talk over these things. Mary was quick to begin analyzing the problem. "You both saw him walk up on the porch?"

"That's right."

"And he couldn't have come off it without your seeing that too. He couldn't have gone through the woodshed door, or the floor, or the roof of the porch. He could only have gone into that house while the storm door was open, obscuring your view."

"And either Mrs. Gaines knew about it or she didn't," the sheriff chimed in. "But where did he hide?"

"He might have slipped out a window or something," Mary suggested.

"Not without her seeing him, aiding him," I said. "Remember, we were only an instant behind him, and she let us in at once. She wouldn't have had time to wait at a window and close it after him, and when I circled the house myself a few minutes later all the windows were closed."

Mary's face suddenly glowed with triumph. "All right, how's this? Philby had to enter that house. He couldn't have gone anywhere else. Yet he had vanished a moment later. Keep in mind two things. First, Abby Gaines had business dealings with the murdered man, sold him a good share of the farm after her husband died. Maybe he cheated her or she thought he had. Second, you've described James Philby several times as a small or short man. His mustache and slicked-back hair could easily have been fake."

"What are you trying to say, Mary?"

"I forget whether it was you or Sherlock Holmes who first said that when you've excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

improbable, must be the truth. The missing James Philby and the widowed Abby Gaines are the same person."

Sheriff Lens and I stared at each other. "Well, I don't know," he muttered. "That seems awfully far-fetched. But it might be worth another drive out to her place. What do you say, Doc?"

I stood up. "Let's go."

"I'm coming too!" Mary Best decided. "We can shut the office, can't we?"

It was only ten minutes to closing time. "Sure, come along."

On the way out the highroad, Mary sat in the back seat and continued to build her case. "You never saw the two of them together, did you? And Philby never came around until after Jesse Gaines died. He wasn't needed then. He wasn't needed until Abby was alone and plotting her revenge on the man she felt had stolen her property."

"You might have something," Sheriff Lens said grimly. "We'll see."

"There's more. I mentioned Sherlock Holmes before. Didn't either of you notice the similarity between James Philby's name and that of James Phillimore, in one of Holmes's unrecorded cases? Phillimore was said to have gone back into his house for an umbrella and vanished. James Philby went back to Abby Gaines's house for a lightning rod that first time, and vanished."

I had to chuckle at that, at the weird twists that fate sometimes played. But we were almost at the Gaines house, and I couldn't let the game go on any longer. "Mary, Mary—James Philby and Abby Gaines are not the same person. They could never have been the same person. I've been treating Abby Gaines for a year—"

"I know that but—"

"—and Eileen Crawford told me Philby helped out with the harvest last year, working alongside the other men with his shirt off."

"Oh. Then how—?"

"Let me off here by the driveway. You two wait in the car."

I avoided the house and went directly to the barn at the rear of the property. Though it was almost suppertime, there was still plenty of daylight left. I entered the old barn through the big sliding door and looked around, taking in the hayloft and the empty stanchions where cows had once been confined for milking. Sheriff Lens had been out here, I knew, but only briefly. I lit a match and dropped it onto a small pile of straw at my feet.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It took about five minutes for the barn to fill with the aroma of burning straw. I was about to stamp out the fire and give up when there was a slight movement in the hayloft directly above me. A figure emerged and started down the rickety wooden ladder. It was the missing salesman, James Philby.

"I'm glad to see you back with us again," I said.

"Put out that fire before you burn the place down!"

I stamped it out and followed him from the barn. "The sheriff's waiting at the end of the driveway," I pointed out, in case he was thinking about running away. "Why did you kill Douglas Crawford?"

"It's a long story."

"I've got plenty of time." I saw that Abby Gaines had come out on her porch to see what was going on.

"He had some business dealings with my father years ago. My father killed himself and I always blamed it on Crawford. It was the biggest thing in my life, and when I mentioned it to him he didn't even remember it."

"So you killed him." We were walking slowly out past the house. The sheriff and Mary had gotten out of the car to meet us.

"Yes. I tried twice last year and failed both times. I sold him a sundial with a particularly sharp pointed gnomon, hoping I could trip him so he'd fall onto it. That didn't work at all. I helped with the harvest and was invited to supper, and I poisoned his soup, but he and his wife changed places at the last minute and I had to tip over the bowl to keep her from being poisoned. She must have thought I was awfully clumsy. This time I decided I'd waited long enough. I shot him with my rifle and gambled on making a getaway. After dark tonight I'd have headed across country."

"After arranging to disappear at the Gaines's front door."

"I tried it with you and the trick worked fine. I figured it would work just as well with Sheriff Lens."

"Both times your car was just off the road, so we couldn't get around it. We had to watch your little drama from the road, where the storm door provided the perfect shield."

Sheriff Lens had come up with his handcuffs. "Perfect shield for what, Doc? Was Abby Gaines involved after all? Was she hiding him?"

"No, no. The poor woman is completely innocent. I imagine he chose this place simply because it had a barn that wasn't being used.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There are lots of good hiding places in an old barn. But he had to focus our attention on the house, not the barn."

"How'd you do it, Philby?" the sheriff asked.

"Let Dr. Hawthorne tell you. He seems to know everything."

"My big mistake was in assuming that woodshed door was always locked," I continued. "Of course it wasn't. I stood right here and watched Crawford open it to put some cans of maple syrup inside. In truth it was usually unlocked, like the Gaines front door. You simply stepped through the woodshed door and bolted it behind you, both times. Then, while the house was being searched, you ran out the back door to the barn and hid there. The first time, you probably found just the hiding place you needed."

"Wait a minute!" Mary Best objected. "You said yourself, Sam, that he couldn't reach the woodshed door while still holding the storm door open to block our view. They're ten feet apart."

"We all forgot one important fact. Both times he worked the trick, Philby was holding a six-foot-long lightning rod in his hand. He'd left it next to the front door the first time. He held the storm door open with the lightning rod until he reached and opened the woodshed door. Then, as he pulled the lightning rod into the woodshed after him, the storm door swung shut on its spring."

"I'll be damned!" Sheriff Lens said.

"That reminds me," Philby told us suddenly, "I left my lightning rod in the hayloft. Can I go back to the barn for it?"

"Get in the car," the sheriff ordered. "Your disappearin' days are over."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WORLD'S MOST BAFFLING CRIME!

For more than 100 years, the murders of Andrew Jackson Borden and his second wife Abby Gray Borden have been a subject of controversy and speculation, piquing the imaginations of criminologists, historians, and writers. The basic facts of the case are well-known: on August 4, 1892, the family of Andrew Borden, banker, one of the wealthiest residents of Fall River, Massachusetts, awoke to a day already stiflingly hot and began their usual morning activities. Bridget, the Irish maid, prepared an enormous, if rather unappetizing, breakfast, while Abby Borden conversed with the visiting Uncle Morse, a relation of her husband's first wife, in the study. After completing his ablutions in the kitchen sink (the only source of running water in the house) Andrew Borden joined Abby and Uncle Morse in the dining room. Andrew's daughter Lizzie did *not join the family for breakfast. Relations with her stepmother* Abby had long been strained, and Lizzie and her older sister Emma, who was visiting friends in Fairhaven, frequently avoided her.

Lizzie kept to her room until 9:00, by which time Uncle Morse had set off to visit another niece and nephew at an address a couple of miles away, and Andrew was preparing to leave for his office downtown. There is much debate about Lizzie's movements the rest of that morning, but it appears that after giving her father a letter to mail to Emma, she drank a cup of coffee and disappeared, presumably upstairs. On Abby's instructions, Bridget began to wash the downstairs windows, from the outside first, leaving the kitchen door unlatched to facilitate reentry. Abby went upstairs to the guest bedroom to remake the bed Uncle Morse had slept in.

By 9:45, Abby Borden was dead, struck several times with an axe as she knelt on the floor of the guest bedroom. The front door was locked and bolted when Andrew Borden returned home an hour or so later; he was let in by Bridget. Under police questioning, Lizzie was later to give inconsistent testimony concerning her *whereabouts, a fact she attributed to the stress of a long interro*gation. She finally insisted that she was in the kitchen when her father came in. She helped him to settle for a nap on his couch in the study and then went about her own business outside. By 11:20 she had returned to the house and discovered his body, hacked apart at the head and shoulders by numerous blows with an axe. She ran to the house of a neighbor, Mrs. Adelaide Churchill, for help.

A week later, Lizzie was arrested and charged with the murders. Although she was acquitted at her trial, suspicion remained high throughout her lifetime and she was subjected to ruthless vilifica-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion by the press. Some years after the murders, when she had come into her share of the inheritance from Andrew Borden's estate and had established a lavish, if isolated, style of life in the most fashionable section of Fall River, she again found herself under threat of arrest, this time on a shoplifting charge. The facts here too are unclear, but the incident shows how desperately the public desired a solution to the crime, for her accusers, one of them an editor of the Providence *Journal,* proposed to drop the charges if she would but sign a confession to the murders. (See *Lizzie* by Frank Spierling, Random House, 1984.) Although she did eventually sign a confession that she stated was forced by the pressure of this blackmail, Lizzie was safe—she could not be brought to trial again for the murders.

Despite her acquittal, Lizzie Borden was widely considered in her lifetime to be the most likely perpetrator of this most notorious of crimes, and probably is still thought to be so today. Yet the facts—or, more interestingly, the gaps in the facts—have suggested a number of other solutions. For instance, no verification appears to have been made of the alibi of Lizzie's sister Emma, whose motive for the murders was stronger than Lizzie's in that she had a more openly hostile relationship with their stepmother. And what about Bridget, who years later, thinking she was on her deathbed, was to state that she had a confession to make, only to commit herself to silence again when she recovered her health. At least one witness claimed to have seen a suspicious and blood-bespattered stranger in the vicinity of the Borden house on that fateful day, and it is not unlikely that Andrew Borden, known for his stinginess and rapacious business practices, had made enemies outside his own household.

The absence of crucial information about the movements of the key suspects, the plethora of possible motives for the murders, and the heinousness of the crime itself naturally give rise to a curiosity that will probably never be put to rest. But for those still hooked by this tantalizing mystery, there should be some temporary satisfaction to be found in contemplating imaginative reconstructions of the events. On this hundredth anniversary of the murders, we present one such invention, which points to a culprit perhaps no one has thought of before. Yet this fascinating addition to the Borden literature is not in its author's own view the true solution to the mystery; here, as in her previous piece on the Borden case (*Goodbye, Miss Lizzie Borden*) Lillian de la Torre imagines what took place in satisfying dramatic terms, and deals with the key questions in an innovative way, but the truth, as she noted in a letter to *EQMM,* does not necessarily lie with what is most satisfying to the imagination. And in this case, Ms. de la Torre gives credit for the correct deduction to her lifelong friend Dr. Mary Smith, whose theory of the case we also include....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE SMALL SHADOW

by LILLIAN de la TORRE

"I am afraid," said the young lady to her bosom friend, "that someone will do something to Father."

Barely twelve hours later, someone took an axe and did.

Father, some might say, was an old curmudgeon who needed chopping up. He was Andrew Jackson Borden, banker, of 92 Second Street, Fall River, Massachusetts. He was worth a cool half million, and he had amassed it by being "a little near." He was in the habit of bringing home from his rent-collecting rounds old broken padlocks and pieces of string. He was far too stingy even to install a bathroom in the narrow old house on Second Street. The only plumbing was in the basement.

Above stairs, banker Borden's house was a house divided. Maggie, the Irish maid, was above it all in the attic; but on the bedroom floor there was an uncrossable frontier. The two factions even approached their strongholds by different staircases.

The Borden daughters used the front staircase. As they came in the front door, they would see ahead of them the doorway to Mr. Borden's study, a well-appointed room with built-in closet, fireplace, and convenient couch of black horsehair. To the left of that was the door into the dining room, and in front of that the front staircase.

The stairs turned round a halfway landing, and arrived on the square upper hall.

On the upper landing the ladies had a choice of doors. That on your left led into the best bedroom, for some inexplicable reason set aside as the guest room. I cannot think why Miss Lizzie, a strong-minded young woman, had not claimed it. But it remained the guest room. Nobody ever went in there; except Uncle Morse on one of his family visitations.

The other door leads into the second-best bedroom, which Miss Lizzie *has* claimed. She is the younger daughter—Miss Emma is forty-two to Lizzie's thirty-two—but when she decided to have the room, Miss Emma meekly gave it to her, and moved into the small dressing room adjoining.

© *1992 by Lillian de la Torre.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The architect of this uninviting dwelling intended that the family should pass and re-pass from front to back bedroom by a door leading from Lizzie's room. But now that door is triple-locked, with a key and a bolt on one side, and a hook on the other.

In the communicating room at the back dwells Andrew Jackson Borden, in connubial union with the second Mrs. Borden. They also have a communicating dressing room; Mrs. Borden's desk stands there. Their room is off the backstairs landing. Now that the door to the front is locked, Mr. Borden and the second Mrs. Borden have to use the back stairs.

It is the second Mrs. Borden to whom Miss Lizzie and Miss Emma object. Their mother was the first Mrs. Borden.

They object to the second Mrs. Borden's dumpy corpulence and her unimaginative cuisine. They object to her fingers in the old man's pocket. They refuse to call her "Mother"; they keep away from her, even to the point of missing meals, or getting out of town.

On August 3, 1892, Miss Emma is out of town. Miss Lizzie is in a pet. She is unwell. She locks herself in her room, and won't eat at all, even in the kitchen. At six o'clock Uncle Morse arrives in his peregrinations, but Lizzie won't come down. At eight o'clock she clears out of the house. She goes over to Alice Russell's.

"I am afraid," says she, "that someone will do something to Father."

Many things have happened in the past year, she says, to cause uneasiness.

It started when somebody broke into Mrs. Borden's desk, up there on the second floor. They stole some money, a watch, and a quantity of streetcar tickets.

There is no doubt about this event. The police were called in, and studied the forced lock carefully. They failed to identify the culprit.

Further disquieting events followed. "A man" called on Father, and loud words ensued. A "small shadow" was seen sneaking past the side door at twilight.

"Pooh," said Alice Russell, "just boys after the pigeons."

They certainly had pigeons about the barn. Still, after that they were careful to keep the side screen-door hooked. The front door was always triply guarded—spring-locked, bolted, and chained.

Now, in the hot New England summer, things were getting worse. They had all been poisoned, only two days ago.

"Someone put something in the milk," says Miss Lizzie. "It stands out, and anybody can come along and put something into it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Russell is not impressed.

She ought to be. The next day, of that household of four, two lie dead. Mr. and Mrs. Borden have been chopped up with an axe.

It is possible to reconstruct that bloody morning, up to a point.

At 8:30 Banker Borden goes out to collect his rents. Uncle Morse departs to call on others of his many relations.

At 9:00 Miss Lizzie comes down, still grumpy. She won't take breakfast, but she picks at miscellaneous items in the larder—a cookie here, a banana there, a little cold mutton soup to moisten the mess.

At 9:15 Mrs. Borden instructs Maggie to wash the windows. Maggie goes outside with her rags and her pail, leaving the side screen-door unlocked for future ingress. Mrs. Borden goes up the front stairs to remake the guest-room bed. Uncle Morse has checked out.

Maggie goes around the house, from one side to another, washing windows. When the windows are finished, she comes in. In the kitchen she has a desultory conversation with Miss Lizzie, who has been piddling away a little more of her useless life ironing handkerchiefs, glancing at back numbers of *Harpers,* and what not.

Maggie now goes upstairs for a bit of shut-eye. Miss Lizzie goes upstairs too. When old Mr. Borden comes home, about eleven, he gets a cold reception. The door won't open to his key; the bolt and chain are on. Maggie has to come down and let him in. As she admits him, she hears Miss Lizzie laugh.

Her risibility past, Miss Lizzie comes down and welcomes her father. It is a hot day; he had better take a siesta. With daughterly solicitude she makes him comfortable on the horsehair sofa. Maggie goes up to her cockloft again to complete her interrupted nap. Miss Lizzie continues her aimless drifting, pausing in the barn a moment to eat some of the pears that are ripening there. Again all is quiet.

At 11:20 a neighbor, Mrs. Carpenter, looks out and sees Lizzie come to the side door.

"Mrs. Carpenter! Mrs. Carpenter! Come quick! Something has happened to Father!"

It brought the neighbors on the run. They looked at Lizzie curiously, as women will, to see how she was "taking it." She is pale, after seeing that bloody work, but neat and composed.

Then come the police and the medical men, and the starers and the gapers, and the hobbledehoys to wander about the fringes.

It was a field day for the boys. "Brownie" and his chum Barlow entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of things. They went into the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

barn and rummaged about for "evidence." It gave them an agreeable shudder.

"We came down," said Brownie, "we were afraid somebody would drop an axe on us or something."

Nobody did. They were all looking for an axe: a small one, with a blade three and a half inches along the cutting edge.

With it someone had murdered Mr. Borden.

In a welter of blood he lay on the black horsehair sofa, his head shattered by eleven blows. Upstairs his bereaved daughter submitted to the ritual of loosened stays and eau de cologne.

Where was Mrs. Borden?

Miss Lizzie rather thought she was out on a sick call.

She was not. She lay on her face at the far side of the guest-room bed, and she was as dead as her husband.

Certain things could be deduced about the two deaths.

Mrs. Borden died first. She died about nine-thirty, as she was finishing the guest-room bed. When the first blow was struck, she was on her knees beside the bed, facing its head. The blow was struck by somebody standing in front of her, and that blow killed her. Nevertheless, the killer, in fury or panic, rained twelve more blows on the fallen head.

Mr. Borden died soon after he lay down at eleven o'clock. He too suffered more blows than were needful. The blows all came from the same axe, which was never found; and the hand that wielded it was a hand of mediocre strength, as it might be the hand of a woman.

Between the first deed and the second, the killer had waited, somewhere, an interminable hour and a half.

That wait did it. It was hard to think of a killer from outside, drenched in Mrs. Borden's blood, waiting in the house for ninety endless minutes, at imminent risk of discovery, for any purpose whatsoever.

After milling about, reluctantly, for seventy-two hours, they arrested Miss Lizzie and put her on trial for her life.

She took her trial with truculent calm. She got off. The Borden killer was drenched with spurting blood; a half-dozen witnesses, including forensic chemists from Harvard, swore she had no blood on her. Yet she was seen within a few short minutes of the time her father must have died.

Miss Lizzie was found "not guilty" by a jury, but not by the world. To this day she stands as the prototype of the fascinating, enigmatic, indomitable murderess who kills and keeps her secret.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is this why the crime has never been solved? For this view deprives us of the evidence given by the person closest to the victim and the crime—Miss Lizzie herself.

There are three possible solutions:

1) Miss Lizzie did it.

But there was no blood on her; and the women who looked at her sharply twenty minutes after the blows were struck in a rain of blood saw no sign of washed hair such as a woman would surely notice.

2) Miss Lizzie didn't do it; but she knew who did.

This is nonsense. Edmund Pearson called it the last resource of intellectual bankruptcy. For only one person living would Lizzie have forfeited her liberty and risked her neck; and that person, Miss Emma, was safe as houses, conceded a perfect alibi by the police of Fall River.

3) Miss Lizzie didn't do it, and had no idea who did.

One and two are eliminated. Let us take three, and see where it leads us.

If Miss Lizzie was not lying to cover someone, then we must believe what she says. No one has seriously tried doing so.

All theorists tacitly or explicitly dismiss her alarmist talk to Alice Russell as at best the vaporings of an hysterical old maid, at worst the misleading lies of an intending murderess.

Try believing it, and a new avenue of investigation opens up.

Now we have a new picture of the Borden home: a house besieged by petty annoyances, criminal, malicious, or pointless, until every door is kept scrupulously locked.

Somebody gets in, sneaks upstairs, and steals money and a watch. And streetcar tickets. Somebody small, "a small shadow," sneaks to the barn at twilight, very possibly poaching pigeons. Somebody puts something, nauseating but not lethal, into the milk.

A campaign of pointless annoyances against the pickle-nosed Bordens. By somebody not quite man-size.

Suppose the Borden murders were the last annoyance in the series, beginning as another bit of petty marauding, a foray into the best bedroom, and ending, horrifyingly, in two bloody murders nobody intended to commit.

Suppose that the murderer returned to the scene of his crime, and only got brushed off by officialdom as one of those hobbledehoy boys.

Brownie? Barlow? Boys at the scene of the crime were thick as sparrows. Perhaps one of them was shaking, not with pleasurable

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ghoulishness, but with a horror freezing to the marrow, and yet inescapably urging him back to the scene. The public would not see a murderer, but only a scapegrace youngster nosing in where he shouldn't.

It answers the question no other solution answers: why was Mrs. Borden on her knees? (Not begging for mercy, for she was taken unawares: Maggie, outside the open windows, heard no sound.) Ask yourself what would *you* do if you caught a glimpse of something puzzling under the guest-room bed. You would get down and look. If, like Mrs. Borden, you weighed 240 pounds, before you could heave yourself erect again, the terrified young sneak thief would be out and striking. If he had an axe in his hand, because he fancied himself on his forays as an Indian brave or a Tong hatchet-man—Tong hatchet-men were highly popular in the Borden case, some theorists attributing the murders to a real one—if he was a hatchet-man, too bad for you. Sheer terror keeps him striking, with his arm no stronger than a woman's. Then he runs downstairs, covered with blood—and sees Maggie outside the house.

Of course he ought to run for another exit. But he is in full panic. He runs for cover—into Mr. Borden's room, and into the closet.

Then his escape is blocked. Lizzie is about with her handkerchiefs and her out-of-date *Harpers*, Maggie with her bucket. Old Mr. Borden arrives and demands entrance; the women come down and bustle about.

Then quiet falls. The terrified boy comes out of the closet.

On the sofa Mr. Borden turns and sees him. The pattern has to be repeated.

Then, at last, the boy pelts out and away. A plunge into any horse trough, or the river—any boy is entitled to fall into a river in August.

The axe sinks to the bottom. No policeman is likely to inquire after every axe in Fall River, or examine every boy's seams for chemical traces of blood, or take a census of all the barefoot boys who fell in the creek on a hot day in August.

Of course he had unhoped-for luck not to be observed in his flight. But ringed with observers, the Borden murderer had luck in escaping observation, whoever that murderer was. Of course he had luck that the scenes of the crimes were stupidly tramped over and messed up, so the marks of his small bloody feet were marred beyond recog-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nition; but that luck covered the Borden murderer, whoever the Borden murderer was.

He is safe. By sheer accident he has committed the world's most baffling murders, and escaped to grow up with no scar on his character. Who knows what scar he bore on his memory?

CUSTOMER SERVICE OR SUBSCRIBER ASSISTANCE

Please direct all changes of address and subscription questions to: Ellery Queen, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, IA 51591.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mary Daehler Smith is a professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University. She received her doctorate from Harvard University and is a specialist in Victorian literature. . . .

LAMENT FOR A LEGEND: LIZZIE BORDEN REVISITED

by MARY D. SMITH

It is no wonder that many readers, Dorothy Parker and myself among them, felt that in absolving Lizzie Borden of guilt, Ed Radin had done no service to American folklore. We were fond of that dark drama, perversely proud of our own O'Neill heroine, our cut-rate Clytemnestra. We liked the impression of hideous passions churning in that dark, narrow, acutely uncomfortable Fall River house: we enjoyed reading about that last unspeakable breakfast menu on the hot morning in August when the aforesaid passions at last erupted into a red explosion. We loved the grisly details, the accounts of the skulls produced at the trial, of the splashes of blood behind the pictures on the parlor walls. Above all, we loved Lizzie because she got away with it.

But we read Radin, and were convinced against our wills, and formed the Friends of Lizzie Borden Society, and hanged Pearson in effigy for smirching the character of that blameless lass. And yet there lingered a kind of wistful longing for the old unregenerate days when we could believe in Lizzie's guilt. Then Victoria Lincoln came along to say that of course she done it; the whole neighborhood knew she done it, and she wasn't allowed to speak to Miss Lizzie when she was a child in Fall River because everyone knew she done it.

And she added some fascinating information about the management of menstrual periods, and an ingenious theory about how the axe could have been concealed, and once again we could believe the pharmacist's clerk who said Miss Lizzie had tried to buy prussic acid a few days before the murders. . . . But Victoria Lincoln didn't give

Copyright © 1978 by Mary D. Smith. First appeared in The Armchair Detective 4/78.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

us back our dark O'Neill heroine, not quite; she sketches a rather pitiful girl, subject to epilepsy and migraine and terribly fond of her father—so fond that when she woke up on that hot morning to find she'd done in her stepmother in an epileptic fit, she then did in her father as well, to spare him the knowledge—but gently, gently—only some nine or ten strokes of the axe, not the seventeen-odd it had taken to shuffle off Ma's mortal coil.

Then there were all the other theories: Lillian de la Torre's ingenious fingering of Emma as suspect, Q. Patrick's two-person theory, and that last lovely bubble which assumes that Andrew Borden killed his second wife because he was annoyed at her ever-increasing weight, and that Lizzie then killed him in order to spare him the trauma of a trial. A kind of multiplication of improbable motives.

At least Pearson's motive feels right. He assumes a Lizzie tired of poor living, afraid that Andrew would be influenced to give the greater part of her inheritance to her stepmother, planning mayhem in an amateur and clumsy way for perfectly understandable reasons. But Radin's case against Pearson is well taken; he does conceal vital testimony from the reader, and he is too convinced that Lizzie is guilty to be entirely trustworthy. And Radin does build a good case against Bridget—opportunity and means ready to hand, a chance to get rid of incriminating evidence—only the motive is a bit weak. Bridget did it, says Radin, because she was angry at having to wash windows, and he quotes a number of other cases in which servants went berserk and bloodily destroyed their employers.

The mystery remains popular, and now that Edgar-winning TV scripts are written about Lizzie, it's perhaps time to sort the evidence out again. Not that there's much firm evidence; the Fall River police seem to have fallen all over their fat Irish feet in bungling the investigation. (All the same, it is difficult to believe, as Victoria Lincoln would have it, that a policeman searching the house for an axe or hatchet would avoid looking into a hatchetsized receptacle in the bedrooms just because he was embarrassed by its menstrual cleansing purposes.)

But one piece of evidence does seem to be firmly established, and it is that piece—the length of time that must have passed between the two murders—that makes nonsense of most theories about the crime. We know how long it would have taken to digest that appalling breakfast, and how far the processes of digestion had gone in both victims, and so we know that at least ninety minutes must have elapsed between the killings. Now if, as Pearson suggests,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lizzie had planned the murders, she would probably also have planned to cast the blame on some homicidal intruder; why then select a time when the maid was in the house, and her father absent for an extended period, to kill her stepmother? Bridget was presumably planning to leave the house that afternoon to attend a sale of dress goods; why not wait for a time when she would be alone in the house with both victims, and with some chance of making the intruder story stick? And if Bridget is the killer, as Radin suggests, we then have to believe in a fit of homicidal rage lasting a good two hours, and even the White Queen might have some difficulty with that one. Nor can I readily believe in any theory that makes Lizzie kill her father for merciful reasons, either to spare him the knowledge of her guilt or the disgrace of a trial.

If, however, one looks carefully at the beautifully executed timetable in Radin's book, and then reads his account of Bridget's testimony and Lizzie's, one discovers an interesting fact. Both Bridget and Lizzie lied about what they were doing at material times, but Bridget's lies cover the period when Mrs. Borden was killed, and Lizzie's the time of her father's murder. And that fact suggests a theory.

True, Lizzie had been fond of her father; true, she had given him her high-school ring to wear. But long, weary years separated Lizzie from high school, years meanly lived. Look at the pictures of that narrow, meager house; think of Andrew Borden, prosperous banker, bending over to pick up bits of string and old nails from the street; think of the household with one Irish maid for a family of four at a time when domestic labor was cheap and the normal complement for a man of Andrew's wealth would have been three servants at least. Think of all this, and you know how Lizzie lived. Look at the wide Victorian porches and generous airy rooms of Maplecroft, read of the trips to Boston and the little parties for theater folk that Lizzie enjoyed once she had come into her inheritance, and you know how Lizzie wished to live. No wonder Lizzie, feeling the years slipping away, broke out to friends a few days before the murders that something bad was going to happen; no wonder she played with the idea of poison. And think then of a hot August morning, of a maid, driven beyond endurance by the never-ending work of the house, the heat, and the loss even of her own name (the Bordens called all their servants Maggie; it saved the trouble of learning a new name for each one). Think of Lizzie, called upstairs by strange

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sounds to see the red ruin of her stepmother in the front bedroom and a shaking white Bridget, axe in hand. . . .

She saw her chance and she took it.

No time to arrange a really convincing story; time only to realize that a mutual alibi would be automatically suspicious. Mistress and maid would not normally be in each other's sight for the whole morning. Time only to make a few hasty agreements, perhaps that the first one to have the chance would get rid of weapon and blood-stained clothes. Time to calm Bridget and get her clean; time to borrow the already stained apron. Time to tell her father an unnecessary lie about Mrs. Borden's having gone out; time to wait for his usual nap, to put on the apron and, standing partly screened by the parlor door, to strike her sleeping father.

Perhaps she hoped that the police would believe in the theory of an intruder; perhaps she hoped only that the confusion of evidence would prevent proof, if not disarm suspicion. Perhaps, even, she welcomed the trial, knowing that if she was acquitted she could not be tried again even if Bridget should break later and confess. But she must have had some bad moments during Bridget's trial testimony, and must later have paid her fare back to Ireland with considerable relief. And no wonder Bridget did not want to return to America without Lizzie's permission, for if Lizzie was safe, Bridget was not.

Well, well, it's a theory only, and we'll never know for certain just what it was Bridget wanted so desperately to confess when she lay dying. But I think I know, and if there is any chance beyond the grave to arrange a kind of ghostly conversation, I know whose patricidal hand I'd like to shake.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREE GIFT

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Save over 15% and receive a FREE mug.

Last year *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* celebrated its 35th year as the best in tales of mystery, terror, and intrigue...By popular demand, we are making the 35th anniversary commemorative mug available, **FREE** with your paid subscription.

Each issue is filled with stories to chill and thrill...so enjoy great mystery reading at a great price and receive this **FREE** mug...just for subscribing.

Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine
P.O. Box 7055
Red Oak, IA 51591

❑ YES, send me 18 issues of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* for only $31.95. I save over 15% off the basic price & receive a FREE mug upon receipt of payment.
❑ YES, send me 12 issues for only $23.95.
❑ Payment enclosed
❑ Bill me
❑ Charge
❑ MC
❑ Visa

MGSQ-2

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

St _____ Zip _____

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Current subscribers, for mug only, please send a check or money order payable to *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* for $6.00. Mail to: P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jackie Walsh was born in Virginia and spent the first twenty years of her life there. When she left, she says, she decided to leave in a big way, traveling to London, where she found some of the inspiration for this story. She has now settled in Apopka, Florida with her husband and numerous cats. . . .

THE LAVENDER GARDEN

by JACKIE WALSH

Rounding the back corner of the villa, Phoebe stopped and refused to scream. Over the last eight months, she had made an uneasy peace with the wildlife here, but she had never before encountered anything like this. On the flagstones, a snake was engaged in the slow process of killing a large Tuscan toad.

She shrank back by the stuccoed wall, pulling her sweater around her, her shoulders hunched against the clammy chill.

It was truly, then, the end of winter if the snakes and toads had been woken, however briefly, from the motionless freeze of the season. They had sensed a warmth she hadn't and had taken up life in spring much as it had been left in autumn.

Why hadn't she felt it, this quickening of the earth as it had turned to face the sun? What had kept her from feeling the heat penetrate her blood?

She watched for a second in numbness as the snake's jaws deliberately dislocated to accomodate the venom-poisoned toad. It was far too late to do anything about it, she knew this from hard-won experience. Beat at the snake with a switch broom and the most it would do was simply look at her impassively, unflinchingly continuing its meal. It would never relinquish its hold on its prey. Even if it did, it would be to no purpose. The creature was already as good as dead. There was no saving the toad.

© *1992 by Jackie Walsh.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A rusted hoe had been leaned against the wall only an arm's length away from her. Perhaps Wally had indulged in some fits of late gardening before he had left last November. It would have been very like him, she thought, and imagined him coming in to the large, rough kitchen, smacking his reddened hands together, saying, "Darling, I've just mulched the wisteria, so that's done and by the way, I'm leaving you."

She could easily reach the hoe and with one strong, slicing movement, sever the snake. She had seen snakes killed before and the head went on living for several gruesome moments after it was separated from the body, went on living despite desperate, whispered coaxings for it do die.

Her hand touched the rough wood, fingers testing gingerly for splinters and she raised the hoe soundlessly. Like an executioner, she stood with the blade poised over the head of the condemned.

"You'll only end up with two dead animals," said a voice behind her and she gasped, dropping the hoe innocently to the side.

The snake continued its meal.

She turned and saw Helena Michaels, dressed for a trip into the city, walk toward her. She pushed aside the first flood of confused emotion, then looked at Helena as if she had never seen her before. Elegant, Phoebe thought, making her suddenly aware of her shabby cardigan and denim skirt, both of which should have been relegated to the charity box long ago with no qualms of conscience.

"It's to be expected this time of year, you know." Helena walked toward her, absently slapping her gloves against her bare palm. The air had been inconspicuously scented with cedar and juniper. Now it smelled like a Chanel counter, the waxy aroma of lipstick mingling with the faintly sweet, dry scent of face powder.

"This is, after all, the cruelest month. Things wake up and devour other things. Female things die giving birth to little things." Helena paused, studying her. "You're not still angry with me, are you, Phoebe? No one's ever been before now. After all, it was so perfectly innocent. I hadn't realized—well, you and Wally—" She paused.

Phoebe said nothing, standing there like an Anglo-Italian version of American Gothic while Helena walked around her in black high heels.

Helena sighed. "I came to see you as soon as I heard in the village you actually remained here for the winter. No one stays for winter. Most especially not a winter like this one just past."

"There didn't seem much point in going back."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Oh, darling." Helena said it indulgently and too huskily. "You take things far too much to heart."

A bird cried, rocketing overhead. It moved too fast for Phoebe to positively identify it. A second later, another, larger bird screamed in pursuit.

The sun fell behind a slate-grey cloud and Phoebe noticed how few things had managed to struggle into bloom. A pot of weary daffodils flowered next to the overgrown path to the lower gardens. The vines that covered the steps were like copper wire, coiled, leafless, treacherous.

Whatever else she could have said about Wally, he had had a way with a garden. He could make things bloom that others would have abandoned as barren.

"I can't believe you would stay out here through winter. Your chillblains must have chillblains." Helena's red mouth quirked into something that was almost a smile. "Why didn't you go back to England? And really, what of Wally? Didn't he try to make his peace with you at Christmas?"

She said nothing but remembered the discussion at the kitchen table, a discussion that had degenerated over the hours into one of Wally's monologues. Her hands had been so cold she had had to wrap them around her coffee mug to bring any kind of feeling into them. She had wanted so desperately to feel warm. That was, after all, the reason why they had come here in the first place, because England's cold gray summer was slowly draining the heat from her and in place of a warm, red heart at the center of her, each day had seemed to bring a new infusion of cold and impenetrable dampness. By the end of June, she had felt as if she were walking waist-high through wet cement.

Helena began to edge her way to the kitchen door. The temperature had begun to tumble and her breath smoked when she spoke. "Really, this is the modern age. Things happen. You forgive and forget and get on with your life and your marriage."

Phoebe's voice was acidic. "Until next time?"

Helena's eyebrows rose. "Well, yes. If necessary."

"There isn't going to be a next time." And she swung the hoe high against the grey sky and brought it down on the snake. It wasn't a clean kill. The hoe blade had rusted to dullness and instead of a neat sever, it was a bludgeon. Again she raised the hoe and again, beyond thinking, beyond fear or disgust until she knew the snake was dead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And still it held the toad in its jaws.

The snake's eyes glazed over, and Phoebe watched in morbid amazement as it gave a convulsive, obscene wink.

Helena, black stockings dotted with blood, stared at her.

At last Phoebe spoke. "You'd better go. I'll clean up the mess." She returned the bloodied hoe to the side of the house, listening as Helena's shoes tapped up the stone path to the driveway.

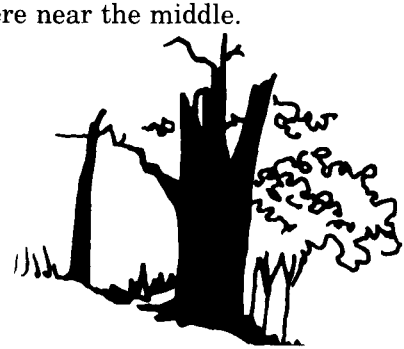
She waited, listening for the sound of Helena's car to fade away into safe distance. Then she brought out the shovel, cleaned and oiled after last Christmas, to bury the snake.

As she edged the shovel under it, the snake's eyes dulled and went vacant at last. Carefully, she made her way down the rough steps to the lower garden. The earth was bare and ready for planting.

She went back up the hill to fetch the seed packets she had left on the kitchen table. It had been a new and uncertain joy to her, to leaf through the catalog and pick what she had wanted to grow. An herb garden, she had decided. To cover an Italian hillside in English lavender. In the years to come, she thought, she would make so many gardens here that she would never again remember where she had buried what she had killed. Perhaps here? no, that corner. Or was it right in the middle?

And in time, no one would visit her. In time, no one would care. She would be known as the crazy English lady, the one whose husband had left her here through the coldest winter this Tuscan countryside had ever known. She would live alone and grow an English garden.

She liked the idea of living out the rest of her life here, of one day being very old, of one day being found and very near her would be an envelope containing instructions for her burial. In the lavender garden, somewhere near the middle.



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

BARBARA OWENS

Only once, as we were growing into womanhood, did I ask Angie why she wanted to be my friend. "I'm not a bit like you," I said. "Not funny or exciting. Whatever do you see in me . . . ?"

BEST FRIENDS

by BARBARA OWENS

Angie's funeral was a terrible ordeal for me. Not that I made a scene—that simply isn't my way. But I was not ashamed to have people see me cry. After all, most of them already knew that she had been my best friend for more than sixty years. It would stand to reason that her death would have a serious effect on me.

After the service, tasteful and touching, Marjorie Randolph (Marjorie Kirkwood, back in the days when all of us were girls), made her way to me in the front pew, her poor old feet shuffling, her head nodding away with that dreadful palsy.

"Oh, Berniece," she murmured, leaning close to lay a hand on my shoulder. "I don't know what to say. Will you be all right, dear?"

I assured her that I would be. "It's been a devastating blow, Marjorie, but you know that tragedy and I are no strangers. I'm trying to stay strong.

"Oh, you *are* strong, Berniece." Marjorie sagged, steadying herself against my shoulder. "Sometimes I wonder how you do it. Come to my daughter's for dinner tonight, won't you? You don't want to go back to that empty house just yet."

Marjorie is a sweet thing, one of my oldest friends, but it's well known that her son-in-law drinks like a fish. I had no intention of subjecting myself to that.

© 1992 by Barbara Owens.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You're very kind, but I'm afraid Mayor Hopper and his wife have already invited me. Perhaps some other time."

Marjorie looked slightly hurt. "Of course, I understand. Well, you call if I can do anything for you."

Watching her painful progress back up the aisle, I wondered what she thought she could possibly do. Marjorie is old, reduced to living with her daughter. My heart ached to remember her—and Angie and me—as girls. It doesn't seem so long ago. How sad that it has so quickly ended in yet another tragedy for me.

Marjorie was present on the day that Angie and I met. We were in the third grade. My teacher, Miss Caulfield, drew me aside that morning as I entered the classroom.

"Berniece, I'd like you to meet someone." A small dark girl stood at her side. "This is our new girl, Angela Benoit. Angela, this is Berniece Hiett. She's going to be your friend and make you feel at home, aren't you, Berniece?"

As a natural leader, I was already accustomed to being singled out for special duties. I smiled at the girl and took her hand.

"I'll be glad to, Miss Caulfield. Come on, Angela, you can meet some of my friends."

I liked the way the girl looked. She was small and quick, and her dark eyes seemed to be hiding a laugh. During our first recess, she taught me how to swallow air and belch. My mother would have been struck down with horror, but I was enchanted. I took her home with me after school, and when Mother wasn't looking we peeked through our hedge and I showed her the neighbor's little boy who had been born with no toes on one foot. Angie thought that was wonderful. We decided that day to be best friends for life.

Aside from the fact that each of us was an only child, we couldn't have been more different. I was being raised in a very proper home. My father was the bank president, and my mother proved influential in all the ladies' groups—Mother always seemed to be pouring tea somewhere. I was fair and slender—willowy was the description applied to me when I grew older. And I was serious, expected by my parents to be an outstanding student. Their only aspiration for my adulthood was that I should unswervingly conduct myself as a lady. That rendered all other accomplishments unnecessary.

Angie, on the other hand, never grew to be much taller than an elf. She possessed a quick mind. Things that required considerable effort from me to accomplish came easily to her, but she was a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slapdash student, more interested in fun than achievement. I envied her and I was fascinated by her. She was never frightened or discouraged for long, and she was quite outspoken, seldom lacking an opinion on any subject. Her parents were much younger than mine, and wonderful—warm and witty. I loved the laughter, the spontaneity in their home, and I went there as often as possible. I always knew, however, that had Mother not been so busy with her social activities, she would not have approved of Angie at all.

However, we quickly became inseparable, Angie and I. We were leaders in everything at school, and because our personalities and interests differed so greatly we never found ourselves in direct competition. Sometimes I could prevail upon her to study harder. She, in turn, enticed me into silly, childish escapades that thrilled me all the while I quaked in fear that Mother would find out. Luckily, with so much tea to be poured in Mother's life, my small indiscretions went unnoticed.

Only once, as we were growing into womanhood, did I ask Angie why she wanted to be my friend.

"I'm not a bit like you," I said. "Not funny or exciting. Whatever do you see in me?"

Angie laughed. "A challenge," she said, poking me in the ribs. Then she realized that I was serious. "Oh, I don't know, Berniece. I just like you. And I know I can trust you." Then she gave an odd little shrug. "Besides, you lend me class."

In our crowd, Angie did everything first. She was first to try new fads, the first to know all the words to every new song. She was also the first to have a boyfriend. Then she had several boyfriends. She and I would discuss them endlessly, weighing their merits in order to make the proper selections. And for the first time I found myself in an uncomfortable position. Angie had always been able to coerce me in questionable directions, but here was a path I was reluctant to trod. To me, there was something innately unpleasant about boys. And as I learned more about the intimate relationships between men and women, I became quite certain that such behavior on my part would definitely be unladylike. However, I was hesitant to share this decision with Angie. Sometimes, when she talked on and on about how the sight of a certain boy made her heart pound and her knees go weak, I would grow so distressed that I would ask her to stop.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Once, when this happened, she leveled serious eyes on me. "Boy, I hope we're not going to have a problem here, Berniece," she said. "Wouldn't it be terrible if you turned out to be frigid?" Then she laughed and, happily, the conversation turned to other things.

When we reached sixteen and were allowed to date, I managed to control my misgivings to some degree. We were the two most popular girls in school, never lacking suitable young men to accompany us. I tried hard to reach the proper level of enthusiasm. I certainly didn't want to be left out of things, and in some ways I enjoyed being flattered and sought after. But, no matter how I tried, I never understood what all the excitement was about.

Angie, however, fell in and out of love regularly. We double-dated frequently, and afterwards she and I huddled together to compare notes. Sometimes I would confess that my heart pounded too, but that was a lie. Only one boy ever weakened my knees and prompted me to feel unladylike, and no one, not even Angie, ever knew about him.

His name was Dean Brewer. He was a year older than Angie and me, tall and quiet with steady brown eyes. But what set me to shivering were his hands. Long strong fingers—the sight of those hands and I felt myself melting inside. However, Dean was unavailable to anyone but Hope Simpson. They went steady all through high school and got married shortly thereafter. Dean managed the Chevrolet dealership in town until he retired. After Hope died, I used to find myself walking out of my way to pass his plate-glass window, and if he chanced to see and acknowledge me with a wave from one of those wonderful hands my knees still gave way. But it was my secret. No one ever knew.

During our senior year, Angie fell in love with Jack Fox. I liked Jack, and I could see early on that this was going to be the real thing. Jack's best friend was a boy named Earl Jessup, and the four of us went out together regularly. My parents wholeheartedly approved of Earl. His father was a county judge, and Earl had inherited beautiful manners. He always acted the perfect gentleman with me, and when we parted to attend different universities, he surprised me with the presentation of a lovely pearl ring.

Earl was killed that year in a swimming mishap. Sad, but in a way I was relieved. I had received many letters from him while we were apart, and I was beginning to suspect that his understanding of our friendship was far different from mine. The whole town grieved for me when he died. I allowed myself to be comforted and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consoled, and it was an easy step from there to wearing his pearl ring as the symbol of my lost love and to vow that I could never marry after losing him. Odd—to this day the only thing I remember about Earl is his fine head of hair.

Angie and Jack Fox were married on Easter Sunday during my junior year in college. Despite her extreme lack of height, she made a beautiful bride. I, as her maid of honor, wore a lovely gown of lavender chiffon—afterwards, even Jack told me I was a "real knockout." But Angie's shocking news a few weeks later devastated me. They were moving away. Jack had been offered a fine career opportunity in another state; she could also complete her nurse's training there.

"Oh, Angie," I told her, "what will I do without you? I'll miss you so much."

"I know, me too," she said, and her eyes misted just like mine. "But we'll still see each other. You'll marry some rich man and we'll all go places together. It'll be like old times."

"No," I reminded her gently. "I won't marry." I let my eyes draw hers to my little pearl ring. "Not after Earl."

Angie studied the ring for a moment. "Well, I hope you change your mind," she said finally. "It would be a shame not to, you know. Earl's going to stay dead, Berniece."

That was the last time we spoke of it for years. Although we saw each other rarely, we kept in touch by letter and phone. Jack and Angie had a baby girl the summer after I graduated. Angie said they were very happy and I believed her. Angie always seemed to know how to be happy. She sent me pictures of the baby and wished me well.

I had returned to work in my father's bank after graduation, and did so well that I was soon promoted to loans, eventually becoming the loan department's manager. My leadership capabilities prompted various organizations to seek my membership; soon my days and evenings were filled with activities. Sometimes I felt hard-pressed to find time for all the things required of me.

I remained at home with my parents, and tragedy struck me twice more before I was thirty. My mother died suddenly and my poor father never recovered from the shock. Within two years he was gone, wasting away before my eyes. Albeit well-fixed financially, I was left alone in the world. But grief fades. As time passed, my life became a comfortable routine, like a soft old slipper that slides on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

easily. I stayed on in the family home. My position at the bank allowed me ample time for my outside activities, and soon I was taking my mother's place in the community. Everyone already knew me as a natural leader, and I found myself enjoying being sought after for every occasion.

There were a few men, during those years, who tried to interest me in something other than a solitary life. I still wore Earl Jessup's ring, however, so each eventually came to accept my loyalty and respectfully faded away. Only I knew of the secret feelings I still harbored for Dean Brewer. Every two years until he retired I bought a new Chevrolet from Dean and sometimes, just riding inside my car, I would feel his presence, envision his nice hands. Only if Dean should ever come calling, I daringly promised myself, would I reconsider my lifelong commitment to Earl. And that wasn't likely to happen. Dean and Hope raised four children, all fine young people, and to all appearances they were always happy together.

One of my constant pleasures was entertaining. My parents had always maintained a lovely home and, if anything, I improved upon my inheritance. I discovered a talent for gardening and soon my lawn was a showplace. It became a sure attraction for townspeople to show off to visiting friends and relatives, especially when my tulips and delphineum were in bloom. If I was lonely I didn't recognize it. I was too busy, there was too much to do.

Then, during the year that Angie and I turned thirty, tragedy scarred my life once more. I received a call from Angie late one summer evening. Both Jack and their young daughter had been fatally injured in an automobile accident. Angie was inconsolable. She had no one to turn to. Her parents were in failing health, and she didn't believe she could deal with her pain alone. Would I please come?

Of course I would. I went immediately, encountering an Angie I had never known before: crushed, defeated, her indomitable strength gone. With me at her side, however, she made it through the terrible finality of it all, and when I insisted that she come home with me to recuperate she accepted gladly. We drove back together. It was intended to be a visit. Angie stayed for forty years.

I don't recall ever discussing making the living arrangement permanent; it just seemed to happen. During those first months she was a sad little shadow, creeping around my big house like a tearstained ghost, but as the year's end approached I was delighted to see an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

occasional smile. After a few more months had passed she greeted me one morning by declaring that it was time for her to get out and go back to work.

If I had been a more demonstrative person I would have flung my arms around her neck. She was beginning to look like my old Angie, the small bounce back in her step, the snap of mischief in her dark eyes. And I suddenly realized how much I'd missed her. The sun seemed to shine a little brighter on me now that she was back. I wanted to tell her so, to hug her and share secrets again, but that simply isn't my way.

Instead, I merely said, "Angie, I think that's a good idea. It's time."

Having become an accomplished nurse, she had no difficulty obtaining a responsible position at the local hospital, and after that first important step her recovery accelerated rapidly.

"Jack would understand," she told me one evening soon after. "I won't waste my life grieving over something that can't be changed."

I thought I saw her eyes light momentarily on my pearl ring, but she said nothing and I dismissed it from my mind.

I went with her to buy a new car from Dean Brewer. He was his usual warm and courteous self.

"It's nice having you back with us, Angie," he said, taking her small hand in both of his big ones. I watched the curve of his fingers, the fine light hair on the backs of his wrists. He turned his smile on me. "And I'm sure Berniece is pleased."

I murmured something appropriate, then we were driving home in Angie's new Chevrolet, parking it behind mine in the stately circular drive.

And the continuation of our old close friendship began. When Angie was not on duty we spent long evenings watching TV together, making popcorn, giggling like schoolgirls over the happenings of our respective days. I attempted to interest her in my clubs and she humored me for a while, but ladies' organizations were not her thing, she finally confessed.

Blunt as usual, she added, "I'm sorry, Berniece, but I have more important things to do with my spare time."

Admittedly, I was slightly hurt. What these important things were I couldn't discern. She seemed to spend most of her time reading, sleeping, or hopping into her new car and going for drives. Angie still loved just to drive around. I had hoped we'd be inseparable again, but it seemed that I had my friends and she was now

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accumulating hers. My feelings were bruised, but I gave myself a scolding. Angie certainly did her share of the household chores, and the bulk of her time was spent with me, so I reproached myself for being a crybaby and never mentioned including her in my clubwork again.

Soon little pieces of Angie started to appear in my home—a lamp here, a wall hanging there, new items of cookware crowding into my kitchen. Our tastes were not the same. On one or two occasions I questioned a purchase of hers as gently as I could.

"Do you really think that's appropriate there, Angie? I believe I liked the old one better—it seemed to blend with the room."

"Don't you like it?" Angie would say. "I think it looks wonderful, but we can get rid of it if you want."

She always looked so pleased, so eager to improve our home together, that I didn't have the heart to say what I felt. Gradually, I learned to live with bright colors and stark lines, simply looking away from them when I passed. Sometimes I couldn't help wondering, though, what my mother's reaction would have been.

I had been reared to consider it good taste leaving draperies closed against the sun, but Angie liked light, so I also accustomed myself to seeing drapes thrown open first thing every morning and Angie's bright smile as I crept, squinting, into the room.

"It's too dark and gloomy in here, Berniece," she had explained at the first occurrence. "Seeing the sun just makes me feel better, doesn't it you?"

I believed that all these little compromises on my part were justified. It was Angie's home now as well as mine, and she should feel comfortable in it. A small price to pay, I told myself, since having her back was such a joy to me.

After a respectable amount of time elapsed, some of the same men who had come calling on me came to call on Angie. She was pretty and funny, so full of life, that I could understand. I was relieved, however, when she sent most of them away. Most, not all. Several times she went out for a quiet dinner and I questioned her about that.

"Really, Angie, do you think it's fair to Jack?"

"Jack would want me to be happy," she replied calmly. "And I'm not sure yet what will make me happy again. If I find some nice man that I'm able to love, that will be fine. Who knows, Berniece? Time will tell."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Suddenly we had been together ten years. Angie and I had entered middle age. Angie wore grey threads in her dark hair and I discovered ugly little lines developing around my eyes. I was now a vice-president at my father's bank and Angie had been promoted to head nurse at the hospital.

Our days flowed like comfortable old silk. Angie had taken over all the cooking. I had never prided myself on my culinary abilities and she was marvelous. All the refreshments for my club meetings were now prepared by Angie, and the ladies raved over them. Once in a while a dark little thought occurred to me—that the women seemed to derive more pleasure from Angie's gooseberry tarts than they did from my tulips and delphineum. The thought did not please me. It was *my* house, after all.

When we were fifty-five, Angie started a vegetable garden in my prize backyard and Dean Brewer's wife, Hope, died. The first event brought me vague displeasure, the second a guilty thrill.

"It will *not* spoil the beauty of the backyard, Berniece," Angie explained patiently when I raised the subject of the garden. "I'll put it out behind the garage. You'll hardly know it's there."

I'd know, but I decided to tuck the subject away for the moment. I had a daring idea that I wanted to share.

"Angie, do you think it would be proper to invite Dean Brewer for dinner some night soon? He's all alone now, with Hope gone and his children scattered. And we've known him forever."

She was poring through a seed catalog. I held my breath for her reply.

"Why not?" she answered absently.

"Will you do the cooking? Something very nice."

Angie looked up with her bright smile. "I'd be glad to. What night shall we do it?"

It took all my courage to approach Dean, and my heart hammered all the way home after he accepted. Angie and I planned the menu together, and I was certain that she didn't suspect how my hands trembled at the mere thought of sitting across the table from him.

On the evening that he was expected it was Angie's bad luck that an emergency came up at the hospital and she had to be away. Dean arrived with two bouquets of flowers, and we made little jokes about my keeping Angie's, too, and not letting her know.

Dean's dark hair had greyed, but he was still a fine-looking man, and our conversation was surprisingly easy, the comfortable talk of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

two people who have known each other all their lives. The meal was exceptional, and when Dean offered compliments I accepted graciously. Angie wouldn't care if I took all the credit. That's what friends are for.

After dinner, we retired to the library for coffee. I felt exhilarated—it was the most time I had ever spent alone with Dean and the heady rush simply refused to go away. He stretched his long legs out from my father's favorite chair and settled a steady gaze on me.

"Berniece, you haven't changed a bit," he said with a wonderful smile. "You always were the prettiest girl in school."

It flustered me so that my composure momentarily deserted me. I heard myself blurt out something about how much I had enjoyed our dinner and I hoped we could do it again soon. Finally realizing that I might have gone too far, I caught myself, adding lamely, "I'm sure it must be lonely eating alone."

Dean looked down into his coffee and smiled again. "Well, actually I don't do much of that," he said softly. "Everyone's been so kind since Hope died. I'm invited out almost every night."

He then proceeded to give me some names, and each one sent a little jolt of pain into my heart. I knew the kind of man he was, and that he didn't realize how it sounded, but every name he recited was that of an unmarried woman or a widow. Dean Brewer was not stupid. He must have guessed that they were out to snare him; he was probably wondering if I planned the same. I was horrified, my pride rushing to surround me like a fortress. I simply would not have him thinking of me in that manner. I cast a final longing look at his hands, and when my front door closed behind him that evening I knew I would never invite him to dinner again.

When Angie inquired how the evening had gone, I was noncommittal. Dean never approached me to suggest a dinner in return, and thereafter when we met in town I was exceedingly careful to be cool and remote. I would never lose my secret feelings for him, but my teenage dream was dead.

By the time Angie and I retired at sixty-five, her vegetable garden had encroached upon a lovely showing of my roses and lilies. It became a constant thorn in my side.

"You've ruined my yard," I snapped at her one day. "It looks like a truck farm out there, all those tomatoes and squash."

"You're getting too old to take care of the yard anyway," she snapped back. "That garden is going to care for me in my old age.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I'm going to take up part-time catering, if you must know. People have been after me for years to do that."

I was appalled. "Good grief, Angie, I will not allow you to turn yourself into a tradesperson. I have more than enough money for both of us and you know it."

I'll never forget the spiteful look she gave me. "I don't intend to become one of your charity cases, Berniece Hiett. I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself. I don't need you, expecting gratitude in return."

I had never been so offended. After I'd taken her into my home, brought her back to life after Jack Fox died, and that was how she repaid me. Finding absolutely nothing to say, I turned and marched away.

Things were never quite the same between us after that. Now that we were both home more, one of us always seemed to be underfoot. When my ladies came, gushing over Angie's refreshments, I held my tongue and looked at her through the window, squatting in her gooseberry bushes, an old straw hat flopping over her face. I became convinced she did it to embarrass me. No question about it—Angie was getting mean in her old age.

She excluded me even more, closing her bedroom door when she went in to read, still going for long drives in her car without so much as an invitation. And there was always someone at the house wanting Angie for something—more and more for Angie, not for me.

One morning I was waiting for her when she came downstairs to fix our breakfast. When she looked at me, half smiling, I said loudly, "I've always wanted to tell you how much I dislike that lamp you've stuck in my lovely foyer. It looks like something you won at a carnival."

Angie's smile went away. "Maybe I did," she answered shortly, and that's all she said to me that day.

And once, while spraying my roses in the backyard, I spied more gooseberry bushes, newly planted. They had almost reached the lovely rock wall around my mother's little fishpond, and the sight of them was just too much. Before I could stop myself I had pulled them up, tender roots and all, and flung them into the trash. Feeling triumphant, I turned to see if she was watching. She was, from the kitchen window, but she never mentioned it and neither did I.

Occasionally, it was like the old days. We would talk and laugh, share stories, and I would think that things were back to the way

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they should be. After all, despite our differences, we were best friends.

But more and more darkness stood between us. It made me angry, and I would feel it necessary to point out to her how good I had made life for her, and how I felt she was ungrateful for my kindness. Usually she ignored me, out almost constantly now in the little Chevrolet station wagon Dean Brewer had sold to her, while I remained at home, pouring tea for the ladies.

Last year it was an unpleasant surprise to turn seventy. How had it happened so soon? But there was no escaping it. I hired a man to come in and take care of my yard. He did a poor job of it, requiring constant supervision, and he has not yet learned. I'm sure I would find aphids on my roses if I went out right now and looked.

Angie's eyes started to go bad. She shouldn't have been driving anymore, but she wouldn't listen to anything I said.

"You'll kill yourself one day," I told her on the morning she died. "And if you insist on being so stubborn about it, don't expect me to cry."

We had met in the upstairs hallway on our way down to breakfast. Angie was dressed to go out, and when I demanded to know where she told me it was none of my business. Then she shook her head and looked sorry. Her hair was white and thinning, but her eyes were the same, dark and shining with that wicked little gleam.

"Honestly, Berniece," she said, "I don't know why I've put up with you all these years. It has to be love, I guess. In spite of all your faults you're the best friend I ever had, but I don't understand why, I swear I don't."

I was flabbergasted. "*My* faults! How dare you speak about my faults? Don't forget this is *my* home. I took you in, endured your bad taste and silly habits all these years—now you dare to talk about my faults?"

We were standing close together at the top of the stairs, but still I found myself shouting. She just looked at me. I was astonished to see sadness fill her eyes.

"I was under the impression that it was *our* home, Berniece. I've contributed just as much to it as you have."

She was right; I didn't know what to say. "Well, it wasn't enough," I managed finally.

Angie turned and started down the stairs. Then she stopped, half turning toward me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Berniece, I have something to say to you. I've been trying to decide how, but I don't think there is a best time, so I'll just go ahead and say it. I'm moving out. I won't be living here anymore."

It was so preposterous that I started to laugh, but something in her face stopped me. She meant it. Angie was going to leave. I stepped down toward her.

"I don't understand. Is it something I've done? What will you—"

She stopped me with an upraised hand. "It will surprise you to know that I'm getting married again." She shrugged; her smile looked almost girlish. "It took me a while, I know, but it's what I want."

I must have looked ridiculous, just staring. "You're what?"

Her smile dimpled. "It's true. To a really nice man. I think we can make one another happy in the time we have left."

The idea was so repugnant to me that I couldn't stop myself. "Angie Fox, that is disgusting! You're an old woman!"

The joy faded from her face. Her eyes turned cold. "I wouldn't expect you to understand, Berniece. It's true I'm old, but I *am* still a woman. Whatever small part of you was truly woman dried up a long time ago." She paused. "If it was ever there at all."

We were leaning toward one another on the staircase, and each word she uttered pierced me like a knife. My best, my only real friend, was going to leave me. My throat was so dry I could scarcely force the question out.

"Who—who is he?"

Then came a name I never expected. "Dean Brewer."

I didn't even feel my hands move. Suddenly they were simply there, closing around Angie's throat, and then I was squeezing so hard that pain raced up my arms. Angie tottered; her foot slid down a step. She made a little strangled sound and her face filled with surprise. Then her hands came up, clutching at my sweater, my face, but I stepped down to her and increased the pressure. I wasn't even seeing Angie anymore—I saw Dean Brewer smiling at me across my dining room table. "You always were the prettiest girl in school, Berniece," he said.

Despite her small stature Angie put up a good fight. We struggled for several minutes before she went limp. Then I pushed her the rest of the way downstairs.

I knew she was dead before I reached her, but I leaned close to be sure. Her eyes were open, looking at me.

"Some best friend you are," I reproached her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

After I was certain that I had regained my composure, I called the police. "Angie Fox has taken a fall downstairs," I told them. "You'd better come quickly. I'm afraid she's dead."

One of the people I didn't favor with a single glance at her funeral was Dean Brewer. He will never get another smile from me.

Everyone has been so kind, so sympathetic. A constant stream of people has found its way to my front door, each individual wanting to do his or her part in helping me through my tragic loss.

Today I was pouring tea for my garden club ladies when two young men came to my door. They were wearing serious faces.

"Miss Hiett, we'd like to ask you some questions about Mrs. Fox's death," one said to me.

Of course I was cooperative, but I soon discovered that theirs was not a friendly visit. They wanted a sample of my hair. They told me that Angie's neck bore suspicious bruises, and that hair strands had been found beneath her fingernails and tiny fluffs of blue wool were clutched in her dead hands. They well knew that I had been wearing a blue sweater on the day she died—I have always favored blue.

While I waited, a prisoner in my own house, they demanded to examine the pearl ring that Earl Jessup gave me. Under a magnifying glass of some sort they discovered a tiny hair caught in its setting. I had missed it—my eyes, like Angie's, are not what they used to be. Of course they'll find it's Angie's hair.

I feel simply mortified. I have been instructed by these two young men to remain in my home until further notice. They said this to me! Why, I went to school with their grandparents, and they would remember that I was a leader, always a leader. Very few people are allowed to tell me what to do.

I mean, really, how can someone like myself be expected to know about such unpleasant things as bruises, hair strands, and specks of wool in dead hands? I was raised to be a lady—I have certainly never mingled with people who dealt in items of that nature.

It has occurred to me, after this visit, that I might be sent to prison. Could that happen at my advanced age? It makes me very angry with Angie. I need her. If she were here she could help me decide what to do.

And I can't stop thinking about Mother. I know just what she would say.

First, a little sigh. Then, "Oh, Berniece, what have you done? That's so unladylike. I'm very disappointed in you." ●

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JUNE THOMSON

If he shifted himself he'd be up there a good ten minutes before her, he reckoned, in plenty of time to pick a place among the rocks overlooking the path where he could stay hidden until she came into sight.

She wouldn't know what'd bloody hit her . . .

CLIFFSCAPE WITH FIGURES

by JUNE THOMSON

Rose Dutton emerged from the front door of the Belleview guest-house and set off along the road which led towards the harbour, a small, trim, vigorous figure, the canvas bag which held her sketching things slung over one shoulder. Seen at a distance and from the back in her jeans and blue anorak, she could have been taken for a teenager, except for the iron-grey hair cut short into a sensible crop.

Across the bridge over the Merron she went, past the gift shop, open but not doing much business as it was too early yet in the season, and the whitewashed house, Fairfields, which sold Cornish cream teas in the summer, making for the stile which led to the path up Highscarle Point.

Tadd watched her go.

He himself had come over the cliff earlier that morning from Trewarth, hoping to find work in the hotel or one of the houses which did bed and breakfast. But so far, he hadn't had any luck. There were too few holiday-makers for any one to need a kitchen-hand or a jobbing gardener. It had been the same story in Trewarth.

Besides, his appearance told against him. He had slept rough the night before and hadn't had a chance to wash or shave. There was

© *1992 by June Thomson.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something, too, about his manner, a sullen, truculent quality, which put people off.

Why take him on when there were plenty of keen local youngsters crying out for employment?

Coming out of the back entrance of the Portmerron Arms where he'd been turned down yet again, he was thinking that if only he could lay his hands on a few quid, he could get a bus into Falmouth where there'd be a better chance of picking up a bit of casual labouring, when he saw her ahead of him.

She was wearing a watch. Even at that distance he could see the strap round her wrist. God knows what she had in that bag either but it was big enough to hold a purse, perhaps even a wallet and a camera. He knew a bloke in Falmouth who'd take second-hand stuff; cheque-books and credit cards, too, at a pinch; no questions asked.

And she didn't look all that big; quite small, in fact, as well as grey-haired, so she was no spring chicken.

It'd be a pushover, he reckoned.

If he took the short cut over the cliffs, he'd get to the top before her.

After that, it'd be dead easy; a quick snatch and he'd be off and away, down the other side into Trevance and across the fields to the A 39 where he'd either hitch a lift off a lorry or wait for a bus into Bude, where he could pick up a connection for Falmouth.

By the time she'd got back to the village to raise the alarm, he'd be bloody miles away.

As she climbed over the stile, he turned back towards the cobbled lane which ran behind a row of cottages. Halfway along, there was a gap leading to a little-used path which zigzagged obliquely up the side of the cliff, steeper and more hazardous than the longer route the woman was taking, the one popular with tourists and sign-posted by the National Trust.

He knew where it led. He'd come down by the same path that morning. And there was plenty of cover in the way of rocks and bushes. She wouldn't spot him; nor would anyone else, come to that.

Shoulders hunched and walking fast, he set off along the upper route and was soon lost among the boulders and the scrub of blackberry and gorse bushes.

Certainly Rose Dutton hadn't noticed him, even though from time to time she paused to look back at the view as it dropped away behind her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Below, the village had diminished in size, the scattered houses and cottages clustering more closely together, their slate roofs gleaming like pewter while the harbour had receded, offering the whole of itself for inspection. She could look down on the curving top of the stone breakwater with the boats lying at angles on the sandy bar exposed by the low tide, and follow the course of the river as it ran down over the rocks to meet the sea.

It was a clear March morning, sunny but with a sharp edge to the wind which had scoured away any early mist and left the air like crystal. In the pure, glassy sunshine, everything seemed to be brushed over with light and so distinct that she could pick out the red, white, and blue of the flag flying above the castellated roof of the Portmerron Arms and the patches of yellow in front gardens where the daffodils were in flower.

After another five minutes, she stopped again, resting her knee, which was still painful from an old injury she had received from a fall while rock-climbing in the Lake District the previous spring. Although so far it gave her no discomfort when walking on the level, any sustained effort caused it to flare up again.

It was a damned nuisance. It had forced her to give up many of her former more energetic pursuits.

In a few months, she thought wryly, I shall be reduced to painting ladylike flower pictures or making pencil drawings of friends' grandchildren at twenty quid a time like poor old Freda Hamilton. No more wild moorland landscapes. No more Cornish clifftop views. This expedition may be my final fling.

Oh, hell and blast!

Still, it couldn't be helped. At sixty-seven, she'd had a good run for her money.

In the meantime, she told herself, enjoy the view. It's probably the last time you'll see it.

Tadd saw her halt for a second time. He was close to the summit of the cliff and had paused himself to catch his breath.

She was over to his left, not looking in his direction but down towards the harbour. All the same, he lay doggo behind a clump of bushes, not daring to stir until she turned and set off again up the path, in case the movement caught her attention and warned her off.

The dazzle of the sunlight, striking back off the sea, hurt his eyes, and he had to shield them with his cupped hands in order to keep her in focus.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What the hell was she looking at?

There was nothing that he could see to keep her standing there for several long minutes, only the effing water and a load of frigging rocks.

Go on, get a bloody move on! he urged her.

At last she started off again up the slope, walking more slowly now, one hand pressing down on her right knee as if it hurt her.

He waited until she had passed out of sight behind a rocky outcrop, close to the point where the path turned to make the steeper climb towards the summit of the headland before he scrambled up the last few yards to the crest.

If he shifted himself, he'd be up there a good ten minutes before her, he reckoned, in plenty of time to pick a place among the rocks overlooking the path where he could stay hidden until she came into sight.

She wouldn't know what'd bloody hit her.

Rose found the steeper incline hard going. The path was uneven, little more than a series of rough, natural steps, formed by the shelves of stone which now dominated the cliffside, thrusting upwards in huge shoulders of slate and shale although the grass and wild flowers still clung on here and there in shallow pockets of soil.

It was too early yet for the sea-thrift.

A pity that, she thought, remembering other years when she'd tramped these cliffs from Tintagel to Morwenstow and seen the cushions of flowers spilling like pink paint from every ledge and crevice.

Before she reached the summit, the pain forced her to halt again. This time she seated herself on a slab of shale to rest her leg, passing one hand gently backwards and forwards across the kneecap while she examined the view.

It would make an interesting subject for a painting, she was thinking. The composition was good. So, too, were the colours.

At this height, the dog-leg shape of the sea inlet leading into the harbour was revealed, hidden from view further down the slope by the steep escarpments of the cliffs which rose on both sides, their rough flanks of dark slate banded by a broad strip of stippled green which marked the high-water line. Every ledge was white with the droppings of gulls. They were circling below her, riding the wind or plummeting suddenly like stones down to the rocky island which came punching out of the sea like a giant fist.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yes, the view would make a good subject. It had the energy and mass which she always looked for in a landscape. There was nothing cosy or pretty-pretty here.

She was about to reach across to her canvas bag for her sketch book and pencil when a pair of crows came striding down the slope ahead of her with that odd, lurching walk of theirs, unafraid but watching her warily with sideways glances from bright black eyes, their heads cocked.

Sitting quite still, Rose watched them, her hand resting on her knee, oblivious of the pain in the fascination and wonder of observing these wild creatures at such close quarters.

I could put them into the foreground of the painting, she decided. With their rounded shapes and glossy plumage, they'd act as a foil to the starker, more geometric blocks of stone.

I'll call it *Cliffscape with Birds*.

Their sudden flight warned her of the man's presence even before she saw him. As they took to the air, their heavy wings lifting them clumsily from the ground, he came plunging down from above her, arms outspread to keep his balance, with much the same ungainly motion.

There was no time to register anything about him, only his dark outline. Her own reaction, like the birds', was immediate. As if by instinct, although it was several years since she had attended the course on self-defence, she sidestepped quickly, deflecting the blow with her forearm as his fist came lunging towards her, the knuckles bunched up white. At the same time, she struck him hard below the nose with the heel of the other hand. As he staggered back, eyes streaming, she brought her knee up into his groin.

She heard his bellow of pain and saw his face, the expression on it a curious mixture of stupidity, terror, and outraged astonishment, momentarily suspended against the backdrop of the sea and sky before it disappeared from sight beyond the edge of the narrow path.

If he screamed, she was not aware of it. His own outcry had roused the gulls and their piercing shrieks drowned any other noise.

After that, she was conscious of nothing outside her own sensations. Crouching on the path, her forehead resting on the ground, she felt the nausea of shock sweep over her and a hot, red flood of pain from her knee where she had struck the man, so intense that it seemed she would be sucked down into its vortex.

But she refused to submit herself, clinging on, as if to a lifeline, to her own sense of outrage.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This was the last time she would ever walk these cliffs. There was no question of that. The decision had been forced on her. And no one, but no one, had such a right over her!

As her anger rose, the tide of pain and sickness receded until at last she was able to sit upright and, dragging herself to the edge of the path, look down over its brink.

The man had come to rest on a ledge about ten feet below, where he lay quite motionless on his back. But he was still alive. Rose could see the arch of his chest rising and falling under the black T-shirt he was wearing, stamped in red, white, and gold with a front-on design of a motorbike and its rider above which was emblazoned the one word "Pow!"

On a rational level, she knew exactly what she ought to do. She should go back to the village and call out the coast guard rescue services, although it would almost certainly be a waste of time. Judging by the blood which was running down over the rocks from under his dark hair, and the twisted position in which he was lying, he had suffered head and spine injuries. He would probably be dead before they could reach him.

Or she could leave him there. But it might be days before anyone found him. At that time of the year, few people walked up to the cliffs.

There was a third possibility which didn't occur to her immediately.

It was the T-shirt which put it into her mind.

The face of the motorcyclist stared back at her, reduced to a gold helmet and two black circles, rimmed with white, to indicate the rider's goggles. Below was another larger red circle representing the headlamp but which had the appearance of a scarlet mouth stretched open in a great shout of rage so that the whole design resembled nothing more than a huge set of features.

At the sight of it, she felt her own anger increase. The painted face seemed to possess a monstrous animation of its own, expanding and contracting as the man's chest rose and fell, as if it were itself breathing in and out, a living symbol of everything that was crude and ugly and violent.

As she watched it, a sudden feeling of hatred and revulsion overwhelmed her.

There was a piece of loose rock lying at the edge of the path, held in position only by the shallow roots of a clump of sea-thrift.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Without stopping to consider her action, Rose placed one foot against it and toppled it over the brink.

Then, not waiting to see where it would fall, she turned and, limping heavily, continued on towards the summit where the escarpment levelled off into the gentler slope of a grassy headland, before beginning the easier descent down the other side to the village of Trevance. Here she spent the rest of the afternoon, seated on a wall, sketching.

The shock of what had happened had emptied her mind of all feelings, even anger. It was like the blank page of the sketchbook in front of her, clean, white, a nothingness, waiting to be filled only with what she was seeing in front of her at that immediate moment.

Trees. A grey stone tower. A row of terra-cotta chimney pots against a blue sky.

No terror here. No rage. Only peace and safety.

Head bent over the drawing pad, she focussed her concentration into the tip of her pencil until it became a fine, precise point which linked her eyes and her mind to the pristine paper in front of her. Nothing else existed.

Later, when she was rested, she walked back to Portmerron across the fields, still feeling curiously drained of all emotion, as if she had just woken from some confused and frightening delirium, the details of which she had neither the strength nor the courage to remember.

"Enjoyed yourself, have you?" her landlady inquired in her soft Cornish accent when, as the light began to fade, Rose returned to the guesthouse. "Where've you been today then?"

In reply, Rose opened her book to show the woman the drawings she had made of Trevance.

"So you've not been up on the cliffs again?" the woman said, bending down to look at the sketches. "I thought you might have, seeing as it's your last day. Oh, lovely!" she added, as Rose turned the pages. "Look at the church! And the cottages! You've caught 'un real beautiful. Don't 'un look pretty?"

Rose had been gone for over a week before the body was discovered by one of the local men walking his dog over Highscarle Point.

The dead man was never identified; no papers were found on the corpse, although the distinctive T-shirt that it was wearing was recognised by several residents of Trewarth and Portmerron as belonging to a man, a stranger, who had come looking for work about ten days earlier.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As for the face, it was almost obliterated by a large rock which had crushed the head and which had become dislodged, it was assumed, from the path above when the man lost his balance and fell. What remained of the features had been eaten away by the crows which inhabited the cliffs in that area.

Although the discovery of the body and the subsequent inquest were reported in the local newspapers, the story wasn't sensational enough to attract a wider press coverage. As the coroner pointed out to the jury, there was no evidence to suggest foul play, and a verdict of accidental death was recorded.

However, there was one piece of evidence, had anyone cared to take notice of it. It was put on public show at Rose's exhibition later that winter at a small London gallery at which her flower paintings and water-colour landscapes of Cornwall sold well.

Everyone said how charming they were.

But there was one pen-and-ink drawing which hung by itself at the far end of the gallery and which seemed out of keeping with the rest of her work.

It was marked Not For Sale; not that anyone would have wanted to buy it. There was something disturbing about its strong, slashing black lines and heavy crosshatching. It had a brooding, almost sinister quality.

It was entitled "Cliffscape with Figures," which was in itself puzzling, for although the woman was clearly visible, seated on a rock and staring out to sea, two birds perched beside her, there was no sign of anyone else unless the vague shape on the ledge below her was meant to represent a second person; a man possibly. It was difficult to tell. The shadows were so densely inked in that it was impossible to identify a face apart from some rounded shapes which might have indicated a pair of eyes and an open mouth and which, taken together, gave the disquieting impression of a death's head.

Puzzling also, to anyone who took the trouble to refer to the catalogue, was its alternative title which consisted of the one word "Atonement."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEXT ISSUE...

13 stories—including

Something Ventured by CARL MARTIN
Curse of the Irish King by JEFFRY SCOTT
The Last Supper by JOSEPH KOENIG
The King of the Orangutans by JAMES POWELL
The Bottle Dungeon by ANTONIA FRASER

JANET HUTCHINGS ..... *Editor*
TARA ANN CUDDIHY ..... *Assistant Editor*
TERRI CZECZKO ..... *Art Director*
MICHAEL McCARTHY ..... *Designer*
CAROLE DIXON ..... *Production Director*
DENNIS JONES..... *Newsstand Operations Manager*
ELIZABETH BEATTY..... *Circulation Director*
CYNTHIA MANSON..... *Director of Marketing & Subsidiary Rights*
CHRIS DORBANDT.... *Newsstand Marketing & Promotions Manager*
CONSTANCE SCARBOROUGH..... *Contracts Manager*
VEENA RAGHAVAN ..... *Director Special Projects*
IRENE BOZOKI ... *Classified Advertising Director*
BARBARA ZINKHEN ..... *Classified Advertising Manager*
JUDY DORMAN..... *Advertising Coordinator*

Advertising Sales Office

NEW YORK
212-557-9100

JOEL DAVIS
President

A. BRUCE CHATTERTON
Publisher

JOE DeFALCO
Vice President, Treasurer

CARL BARTEE
Vice President, Manufacturing

MARY TZIMOKAS
Vice President, Circulation

* * *

ELLERY QUEEN
Editor-in-Chief
(1941–1982)

ELEANOR SULLIVAN
Editor-in-Chief
(1982–1991)

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. Vol. 100, No. 2, Whole No. 601, August 1992. Published every 28 days which includes special issues in March and October by Davis Publications, Inc., at $2.25 a copy in the U.S.A., $2.95 in Canada. 1 year subscription $31.97 in U.S.A. and possessions, $37.50 elsewhere, payable in advance and in U.S. funds (GST included in Canada). Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10168. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to Ellery Queen, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, Iowa 51591. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Canadian third-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario.

© 1992 Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.

POSTMASTER: Send Change of Address to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 7052, Red Oak, IA 51591. In Canada return to 1801 South Cameron, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3E1. ISSN: 1054-8122. Davis GST: R123293128. For back issues, send $3.50 to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, P.O. Box 40, Vernon, NJ 07462.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*Rx *Watch* is a registered trademark of Hook-SuperX, Inc.

GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICES ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS!

SAVE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ON MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND HOME HEALTH CARE PRODUCTS!

SAVE UP TO 60% ON HEARING AID SERVICES AND SUPPLIES

ACUTE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS may be purchased at over 26,000 independent pharmacies nation-wide, including major chain stores (**eg; Hook-SuperX, Brooks, Sav-On; Thrifty, Peoples, Medicine Shoppe**, etc.).

- *Brand name and generic drugs are priced at wholesale prices plus state Medicaid dispensing fee.

MAINTENANCE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS are provided by Hook-SuperX, a nationally known mail order provider.

- *Brand name and generic drugs are priced substantially below retail—guaranteed lowest prices;
- *Home delivery;
- *Prescriptions are checked by a minimum of two pharmacists under the RX Watch Program that is designed to control accuracy and dangerous drug interaction.

As a member you can purchase **OVER 400,000 HOME MEDICAL SUPPLIES**, equipment, non-prescription medicines, and rentals representing over 700 manufacturers.

- *Ambulatory Aids, Arthritic and Self-Help, Back and Cervical Aids, Bath and Toilet Aids, Bedroom and Bed Equipment, Health and Beauty Aids, Orthopedic and Sports Medicine, Ostomy Management, Respiratory, Urological, Wheelchairs, thousands more items;
- *Savings of 20-50% below retail;
- *Home delivery (5-6 days);
- ***FREE** catalog;
- ***FREE** Medicaid/Medicare consulting services.

As a member you can also purchase **HEARING AIDS**, hearing aid batteries, and hearing aid repairs at substantially discounted prices.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Access to 26,000 drug stores nationwide!
NO claim forms!
NO deductibles!
NO limits on usage!
NO pre-existing conditions excluded!

Our Guarantee

If you find a pharmacy that has a lower price for your maintenance drugs (90 day supply) call us. We'll verify that pharmacy's price and charge you that lower price.

Enroll Today!

To get your HBS Medical Composite Card, complete and mail this enrollment form to:
HBS, 2101 South Hamilton Road, Columbus, Ohio 43232
Your card and all membership information should arrive within 2 weeks.
Or call toll-free 1-800-745-8683 to place a credit card order.
Upon enrollment, HBS will notify each national supplier of your purchase eligibility. When you're ready to purchase or use any service, use the 800 number listed on the back of your membership card.

ONLY **$29.95** PER YEAR FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

DP-2
EQ 082

YES! I would like to enroll in the HBS Medical Composite Card Program. I am enclosing $29.95 for the first year's enrollment. I understand that this card covers me, my spouse and children.

Your last name	Your first name	Middle init.	Date of Birth
Address			Social Security #
City	State	Zip	Phone
Spouse's last name	Spouse's first name	Middle init.	Date of Birth

DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS TO BE COVERED

Last name	First Name	Middle init.	Date of Birth
Last name	First Name	Middle init.	Date of Birth
Last name	First Name	Middle init.	Date of Birth

☐ Check enclosed (Please make your check payable to HBS.)

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard Card #_____ Exp._____

Complete and mail with payment to: HBS, 2101 South Hamilton Rd., Columbus, OH 43232

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSIFIED MARKETPLACE

EQ AUGUST 92

ELLERY QUEEN—published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is $3.65 per word—payable in advance—($54.75 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be included in the next issue please send order and remittance to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10168-0035.

ADDITONAL INCOME

GET PAID FOR READING BOOKS! $100 per book. Send name, address to: Calco Publishing (Dept. C-233), 500 South Broad, Meriden, CT 06450.

EARN $50.00/day shopping. Plus $485/week Mailing. Consumer Services D8, Sprinfield, NJ 07081-0008 (Enclose envelope!)

AUTHORS' SERVICES

HOW TO PUBLISH YOUR BOOK

Join our successful authors in a complete and reliable publishing program: publicity, advertising, handsome books. Speedy, efficient service. Send for FREE manuscript report & copy of Publish Your Book.

CARLTON PRESS Dept SMH
11 West 32 St., New York, 10001

LOOKING FOR A PUBLISHER? Your book can be published and promoted by the leading subsidy book publisher. Send for free booklet HP-5, Vantage Press, 516 W. 34th St., New York, NY 10001.

BARGAINS

LUXURY Resort Hotels. $10.00/Night. Waikiki, Mexico, Florida. Information $2.00, Sase: Premium, 2660 Tamoshanter, El Dorado Hills, CA 95630.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

MYSTERY ADDICTS! Free catalogue! New and Recycled Detective Fiction. Grave Matters, Box 32192-C, Cincinnati, OH 45232.

FREE LIST! Used mystery, detective and thriller fiction. Marshall Snow, 292 Providence Rd., So. Grafton, MA 01560.

BOOK & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

FREE Catalog. Used hardbound and paperback mystery fiction. Books West, Box 417760, Sacramento, CA 95841.

100,000 science fiction and mystery paperback, magazines, hardcovers. Free catalogs! Pandora's, Box Z-54, Neche, ND 58265-0133.

FREE Catalogue of used & collectable detective fiction, Dunn & Powell Books, Dept. DP, The Hideaway, Bar Harbor, Maine 04609.

ANNOTATED lists of new mysteries. Also used mystery catalog. Rue Morgue, 946 Pearl, Boulder, CO 80302. Order any in-print mystery: 1-800-356-5586.

SEND 50¢ for Large Listing of Mystery and Detective Books. Canford, Drawer 216E, Freeville, NY 13068.

FREE LIST—Mystery, Science Fiction, Horror. Hardcovers and Vintage paperbacks. Ed McDonald's Mostly Mystery, 111 Boston Ave., Stratford, Connecticut 06497.

FREE catalog of past issues of Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine. APB Magazines, PO Box 214997, Sacramento, CA 95821.

FREE PAPERBACK COUPON. Used Mystery and Detective fiction. Free catalog. No Tie Required, Box 9592, Cedar Rapids, IA 52409.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

STAY HOME! MAKE MONEY ADDRESSING ENVELOPES. VALUABLE GENUINE OFFER. 20¢. Write Lindco, 3636-DA Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60559.

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Processing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Bonuses! Start immediately! Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-RDC, Burnt Hills, NY 12027-0015.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

IT'S NO MYSTERY! Using Zip Codes in your ad assures more responses! AND, when replying to an ad, make sure your request is properly addressed.

We'LL Pay you to Type Names and Addresses From Home. $500.00 per 1000. Call 1-900-896-1666 ($1.49 min./18yrs.+) or Write: Passes - XAH792, 161 S. Lincolnway, N.Aurora, IL 60542.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

WITCHCRAFT Occult Miracle Power Secrets. Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Now accepting students. 1502-AN, New Bern, NC 28563.

MONEY FOR COLLEGE! Guaranteed scholarship, college search, services available. Send SASE to: Planner, P.O. Box 584, Princeton, NJ 08542.

DIRECT CHANNELLED communiques from FRIENDS IN SPIRIT MARIAN APPARITIONS IN N.J. available on film. SASE #10: HBD, INC., P.O. Box 1167, Bayonne, N.J. 07002-6167

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

MYSTERY GIFT CLUB - Receive six exciting valuable monthly surprises - Send $24.95 pp to: JEDCO Enterprises, 23 Terri Lee Lane, Spring Valley, New York 10977.

HELP WANTED

EARN To $329.84 Weekly Assembling Products At Home. Receive Free Information. Call 1-(800) 333-3294 . . . (Message).

HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

AUTHENTIC SPACE SHUTTLE MEMORABILIA. T-shirt - Hats - Patches - Pins - Coins - Jackets and other collectibles relating to Shuttle Flights. Send for Catalog. Mr. Richard Sales, Box 630368, Dept. HQ, Miami, FL 33163. Send $1 for Catalog (cover Postage and Handling). Refundable or credited with first order.

INVENTIONS WANTED

INVENTORS! Your first step is important. For FREE advice, call ADVANCED PATENT SERVICES, Washington, DC. 1-800-458-0352.

FREE kit for inventors! Call The Concept Network. *Patenting *Research *Marketing. 1-800-835-2246 Ext., 197.

JEWELRY

EXACT REPRODUCTION ROLEX watch. World's most honored. Only $39.95. Buy two $79.90 third one absolutely Free. $3.95 postage and handling. Supply Limited. Order immediately! World Wide Enterprises, Box 32815-EQH, Detroit, Michigan 48232.

MAILING LISTS

ACTIVE NEW "HOTLINE" NAMES! GUARANTEED! FAST DELIVERY! MIXED STATES! 200/$20; 500/$35; 1000/$55. Dealers's Co-Op, Box 526-I, Griffith, IN 46319. 1-800-992-9405.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

GOOD MONEY! Weekly! Prosessing Mail! Free Supplies, Postage! Bonuses! Start Immediately! Rush stamped envelope! Foodmaster-DCR, Burnt Hills, NY 12027-0015.

LAZY MAN'S way to 900 riches. Our revolutionary full color brochure shows how. 1-800-925-5807.

GET PAID FOR READING BOOKS! $100 per book. Send name, address to: Calco Publishing (Dept. C-233), 500 South Broad, Meriden, CT 08450.

FEDERAL Loans For Small Business Now Avail, (800) 777-8342 for details.

IT'S NO MYSTERY! Using Zip Codes in your ad assures more responses! AND, when replying to an ad, make sure your request is properly addressed.

YOU'LL MAKE MONEY

SAVE MONEY TOO— BY READING and ANSWERING THESE CLASSIFIED ADS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

EQ AUGUST 92

OF INTEREST TO ALL

EARN $50.00/day shopping. Plus $485/week Mailing, Consumer Services D8. Springfield, NJ 07081-0008 (Enclose envelope!)

MONEY FOR COLLEGE! Guaranteed scholarship, college search, services available. Send SASE to: Planner, P.O. Box 584, Princeton, NJ 08542.

PERSONAL

SINGLE? Widowed? Divorced? Nationwide introductions! Refined, sincere people. 18-80. Identity, Box 315-DT, Royal Oak, Michigan 48068.

GOOD SINGLES with Christian values!! Local/Nationwide introductions! FREE magazine! Rush age, interest. Amber, Box 232, Deer Park, NY 11729.

RUSSIA—SCANDINAVIA—POLAND, etc: Worldwide correspondence between sincere professionals (since 1980), SCANNA, POB 4-EQ, Pittsford, NY 14534. (716) 586-3170.

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS SEEK FRIENDSHIP AND MARRIAGE. American—Mexican—Philippine—European. Photo selection FREE! Latins, Box 1716-DD, Chula Vista, CA 91912.

ORIENTAL ladies seeking correspondence, marriage. Presentations by American husband, Filipina wife. Asian Experience, Box 1214T, Novato, CA 94948. (415) 897-2742.

PEARLS Of The Orient Want To Write You. Details, Photos FREE, VIDEOS AVAILABLE. (#1 in Service Since 1979.) PAL, Blanca, CO 81123-0051. (719) 379-3228.

PERSONAL—Cont'd

BEAUTIFUL BRITISH LADIES & ELIGIBLE BRITISH GENTLEMEN seek friendship, romance & marriage with American ladies & gentlemen! ALL ages! Free details: ENGLISH ROSE INTRODUCTION AGENCY, (Dept. D/P), 2nd Floor, Mill Lane House, Mill Lane, Margate, Kent, ENGLAND. TEL: 01144-843-290735.

WITCHCRAFT Occult Miracle Power Secrets. Gavin and Yvonne Frost. Now accepting students. 1502-AN, New Bern, NC 28569.

RECIPES

CARROT CAKE TO DIE FOR! Family, friends have raved for 28 years. Never given out before. $2.00 SASE: Brinks, 808 E. Ocean Front, Newport Beach, California 92661.

ANNIE'S COUNTRY APPLE CAKE. Old family recipe. Send self-addressed envelope and $2.00: Annies Shaffer, W. 214 Street, Bucyrus, Kansas 66013.

SONGWRITERS

$1,200.00 CASH PRIZE. Poems Wanted For New Songs - Recordings - Publishing. Broadway Music Productions, Box 7438-DA, Sarasota, FL 34278.

TAPES & CASSETTES

OLDTIME radio programs. Mysteries, adventure, suspense, science fiction, comedies. Classic tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froelich, Heritage Farm, New Freedom, PA 17349.

For Greater Savings...Results...and Profits...

PLACE YOUR AD IN ONE OF OUR SPECIAL COMBINATIONS:
Combo #1, Combo #2, or Combo #3.

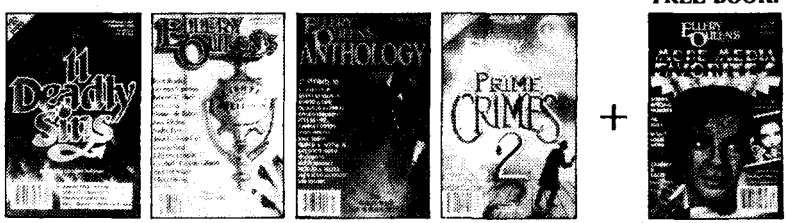
Each combination is designed to give your ad the largest audience available.

Each combination offers you a Special Discount Rate.
For further information write to I. M. Bozoki, Classified Ad Manager, Davis Publications, Inc., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S 51st ANNIVERSARY SALE!

FREE BOOK!



Celebrate our anniversary with savings! For only **$9.95** plus $3.00 postage and handling, we will send you an assortment of **4** Ellery Queen classic anthologies. **PLUS,** receive a fifth book **FREE!**

Please send your check or money order for $12.95 to:

QUEEN ANNIVERSARY ANTHOLOGY SALE
P.O. BOX 40
VERNON, N.J. 07462

Please be sure to include your name and address.

While we cannot accomodate requests for specific anthologies, we guarantee that you will be delighted with your surprise assortment.

Available only in the US and Canada. Canadian orders please add $4.00. Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. US Funds only.

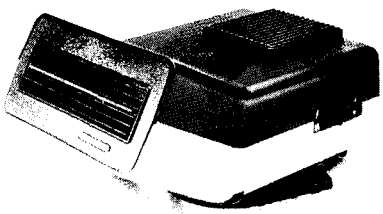
MGNQ-9

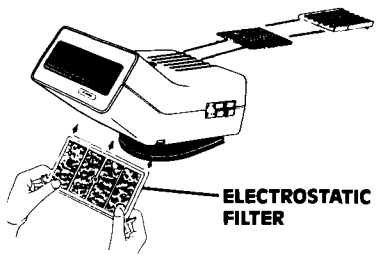
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MAIL ORDER MALL

BREATHE EASIER WITH THE AIR PROCESSOR

Clean air is vital to overall good health and general well-being and there is growing concern about the quality of the air around us. Amcor's Air Processor is uniquely designed to remove indoor air pollution and improve air quality. This compact unit has a high voltage generator that produces negatively charged ions that clean the air of cigarette/cigar smoke, dust, pollen, fungal and bacterial particles as well as a host of other allergy stimuli. The Air Processor also features a blower for air circulation and a unique filter that is permanent and washable. Includes a free Ionoscope that detects the negative ions emitted from the ion generator and proves that it is functioning. Very quiet so it is perfect for any room in your house. UL listed. **99.98** ($6.50) #A2002.





SLEEP SOUNDLY WITH SOUND SLEEPER

Is noise pollution interfering with your ability to get a good night's sleep? If so, then the Sound Sleeper by Audiologic is the clock radio of your dreams. Sound Sleeper combines a state of the art AM/FM cassette clock radio with the benefits of natural sound conditioning. Sound Sleeper lets you fall asleep to the sounds of ocean surf, rushing waterfalls and/or rainfall with the flip of a switch. After a relaxing night's sleep, wake up with a buzzer or music from the radio or cassette. So why have an ordinary clock radio when you can have the cassette clock radio that not only wakes you up but also lulls you to sleep! **$89.98** ($5.50) #A2000.

TO ORDER: Send check with item number for total amounts, plus shipping & handling shown in ( ) payable to **MAIL ORDER MALL** Dept. 082 EL ; P.O.Box 3006, Lakewood, N.J. 08701, or call TOLL FREE **1-800-722-9999**. NJ residents add 7% sales tax. We honor MasterCard, Visa, and American Express. Sorry, no Canadian, foreign, or C.O.D. orders. Satisfaction Guaranteed. 30 day money back guarantee for exchange or refund. Allow 30 days for delivery.

Magalog Marketing Group Inc. © 1991
1905 Swarthmore Ave., Lakewood, N.J. 08701

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The Beatles, Live in Concert"
In full color on fine porcelain
Shown smaller than actual
diameter of 8½ inches
© 1991 Delphi ®

A BRADFORD EXCHANGE RECOMMENDATION
APPROVED

"Ladies and Gentlemen...the Beatles" – a Bradford Exchange recommendation

With those words, on February 9, 1964, Ed Sullivan introduced the Beatles – live for the very first time in North America – to a never-before-heard-of 73 million television viewers.

Now, you can relive the excitement with "The Beatles, Live in Concert," a new limited-edition collector's plate by artist Nate Giorgio. "The Beatles, Live in Concert" © 1991 BGE is crafted in full color on fine porcelain under the Delphi hallmark in an edition limited to a maximum of 150 firing days. To assure yourself of getting this promising plate at the $24.75 issue price – fully backed by Bradford's 365-day unconditional guarantee – just complete the order form below.

BEC-835R

Order Form
The Bradford Exchange
9345 Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60648

Please enter my order for "The Beatles, Live in Concert." I understand that I need SEND NO MONEY NOW. I will be billed $24.75*, when my plate is shipped. *Limit: one plate per order.*

*Plus a total of $3.49 postage and handling, and sales tax where applicable. Pending credit approval. The plate price in Canada is $39.75.

PLEASE RESPOND PROMPTLY

X _____
Signature Date

Mr. Mrs. Ms _____
(Circle One) Name (Please Print)

( ) _____
Telephone

_____
Address

_____
City State Zip

5431-E56691

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED